

University of Montana

ScholarWorks at University of Montana

Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, &
Professional Papers

Graduate School

1954

Catholic Church: Its influence in the development of North Dakota (1818-1889)

Charles Larry Plante
The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Plante, Charles Larry, "Catholic Church: Its influence in the development of North Dakota (1818-1889)" (1954). *Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers*. 5563.
<https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/5563>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: ITS INFLUENCE IN
THE DEVELOPMENT OF NORTH DAKOTA
(1818-1889)

by

C. LARRY PLANTE
B.A., St. John's University, 1953

Presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
1954

Approved by:

Paul C. Phillips
Chairman, Board of Examiners

London B. Castle
Dean, Graduate School

Aug 5 1954
Date

UMI Number: EP41027

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI EP41027

Published by ProQuest LLC (2014). Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.

Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code



ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

Gift
8-24-54

PREFACE

This thesis is concerned with the role of the Catholic Church in the development of the state of North Dakota from 1818 to 1889. The first Catholic mission was founded in 1818. From this time until 1889, the Church and the community evolved from a frontier society into a semi-urban one. While one grew, so did the other. It is impossible to separate the development of the community from the development of the Church. It was impossible to set down a list of conclusions as to the Church's influence; although these influences were present throughout the period. This paper does not attempt to establish the idea that the Catholic Church played the most significant role in North Dakota's development. The purpose here is to place the Church and state development in their proper perspective.

This study was undertaken as a result of a long-time interest in the Catholic Church and North Dakota. Being a native North Dakotan and a Catholic, these interests were naturally intensified. Along with these basic interests was a feeling that a study of this nature was needed. The combination of these reasons is why I tried to develop such a study.

The author owes special thanks to Dr. Paul C. Phillips, whose guidance and long hours of critical reading of this study are responsible for what value lies therein. To him, I offer grateful thanks.

C. L. P.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. THE SETTING	1
II. PEMBINA: AN OUTPOST ON THE RED RIVER	17
III. AN INTERLUDE: 1823-1848	42
IV. BELCOURT: FATHER OF THE CHURCH IN NORTH DAKOTA	71
V. "GREAT OPENING"	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY	125

LIST OF MAPS

	Page
Northwest States: Principal Rivers, Trading Posts, Government Forts, Trails, and Indian Nations	16
Father De Smet's Travels in the Northwest	70
Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of Region Now Comprising North Dakota, 1793-1826	96
Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, 1826-1837	97
Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, 1837-1850	98
Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, 1850-1875	99
Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, 1875-1879	100
Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, 1879-1889	101
Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction, 1889-1910	102

CHAPTER I

THE SETTING

The growth of the Catholic Church in the present state of North Dakota was influenced by a number of important factors and problems. Aside from the Indians themselves, work in the region was hindered by the extreme climatic conditions. The history of the Indians, as well as the white men, bears out the fact that life in this semi-arid region was one of adjustments and modifications, of substituting old customs and habits for new ones in the fight for existence. Snow, wind, dust, heat, hail, floods, and drought were obstacles as formidable to the missionaries' coming into this region as they were to the first colonists landing at Jamestown in 1607.

On the flat expanses of land between the Red River of the North and the foothills of the Rockies, only two seasons exist, winter and summer. The year was governed in early times by the life-sustaining buffalo herds roaming about in search of food and protection. In the early winter, these beasts migrated to the south, thus forcing the inhabitants to pack up their homes and follow. In summer they would migrate to the north again, forcing the natives to pursue them. Spring and autumn were only the beginning and

end of either winter or summer. The coming of drought and the migration of the buffalo to the north characterized the advent of summer on the prairies. This migration of the buffalo and the threat of drought conditioned life on the prairies in such a way that it took on characteristics quite different from the winter months. It forced the Indians to travel northward for their yearly supply of food.

Before the missionaries came into this region, the Indians had developed the use of the horse as a means of obtaining their supply of buffalo meat. Little encouragement was given to the Indians to take up agriculture when the hot, dry, moisture-consuming winds swept northeastward across the unprotected prairies, robbing the soil of any moisture remaining from the spring thaw. As Maximilian of Wied observed, "In the heat of summer, the creeks become dry, and the crops of maize of the Indians often fail in consequence of drought."¹

The missionaries coming into this region had been made aware of the drought problem. When white settlers staked out claims in this region, the missionaries felt it necessary to warn them of the potential danger of crop failure, and to take every conceivable precaution to counteract it. And yet the missionary, in spite of his knowledge of this condition, was always encouraging the savages to

¹Maximilian Prince of Wied, Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834. (Early Western Travels 1748-1846, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, Vol. XXIII.) (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), p. 238.

take up agriculture, because it was a means of counter-acting their nomadic life. It is little wonder that the weather is the main topic of conversation in the little prairie hamlet today as it was in the past. In the 1830's it appeared, "that drought and want of wood are the chief impediments to the cultivation and settlement of whites in the prairies. . . an opinion on which most people agree. . . ."2 In years when the drought was especially severe, fires were not uncommon in the short, dry grasses which covered much of the prairies' surface. Encouraged by the unbroken prairie winds, they would sweep across the prairies leaving them devoid of vegetation and life. Often hundreds of miles of grass would be burned, leaving the buffalo without sufficient feed for the coming winter. In their search for new sources of grass, the bison forced the inhabitants of the prairies to forsake their old homes. Many people gazing across the flat plains would undoubtedly share Tabeau's description whether it was before or after a prairie fire or drought:

The vast and high prairies, separated from the river by those low and humid plains, present to the eye a monotonous expanse. These low plains are ordinarily inundated by the waters of the Missouri, and as they are bounded by a strip of land a little higher, which borders the river, they are without an outlet and the water stays there a very long time. Then the hills again approach the Missouri and offer a different and an uglier perspective. The wooded points, at a great distance from each other, are rarely half a league by three or four arpents in breadth; the greater part of them offer only a narrow

²Ibid., Vol. XXIII, p. 241.

border of cottonwoods, willows, squat ash, and stunted oaks.³

Winter, which lasted five or six months, furnished a "different and uglier perspective" to the inhabitants of the plains. With the first signs of winter, the buffalo migrated to the river bottoms for food and protection. The savages, followed by the missionaries, pursued these animals as they had during the summer months. In these bottoms, Indians and missionaries found fuel with which to withstand the penetrating cold. They pitched their leathern homes or dug into the side of the river banks and prepared themselves for the long winter. It was during the long, sedentary, winter months that the missionary had an opportunity to instruct the Indians. He would instruct them in the basic principles of the Christian religion, as well as crafts and agricultural methods.

Although the long periods of cold clear days were the most common feature of the prairie winter, it was the blizzard that most men feared. The wind-swept snow furnished the descriptive writer with an abundance of material for his pen. Colonel Lounsberry vividly described a blizzard which he encountered in 1887:

It was a mad, rushing combination of wind and snow which neither man nor beast could face. The snow found its way through every crack and crevice. Barns and stacks were literally covered with drifting snow, and when the storm was over, the cattle

³Tabeau Narrative of Loisel's Expedition to the Upper Missouri, ed. Annie H. Abel (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939), p. 66.

fed from the tops of the stacks. . . . Persons lost upon the prairie were almost certain to meet death, unless familiar with the nature of these storms. . . .⁴

All movement stopped on the prairies when the blizzard piled up drifts of snow which broke the monotonous flat expanses of land. During the unusually bad winters, the buffalo had a difficult time finding sufficient forage to satisfy his large body. Thousands died from starvation or exposure to the combined wind and snow. If the buffalo suffered from lack of food, the Indians and missionaries were sure to feel the pangs of hunger. The panic of starvation appeared and reappeared throughout the years while the missionaries served Indians and whites of present day North Dakota. To some, giant drifts of snow and biting cold bring back memories of a fireplace on Christmas Eve, but to the settlers who feared that they might pass before the snow, the only pleasant thought of winter was its end. The migrating buffalo were as much a sign of spring to the Indians and sodbusters as the return of the swallows to Capistrano. They had no bells to ring, or means by which to celebrate, but in their quiet complacent manner, they prepared themselves for the summer. A few were inclined to be optimistic about the summer; others had lived in the region too long to be anything but realistic.

The combination of climatic conditions became as

⁴Walter Webb, The Great Plains (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936), p. 25.

intimate a consideration to the missionaries as eating and sleeping. The first missionaries in present day North Dakota suffered through extreme weather conditions. Their successors, along with the Indians and settlers, profiting by the experience of those who had come before them, attempted to counter-act these unfortunate circumstances. They found, in lignite coal, new sources of fuel to warm the chill of the winter wind. By persuading the Indian to use other means to corral the buffalo, they found checking devices to overcome a prairie fire. When they discovered the use of sod for building purposes, their houses were better suited to keep out the heat of summer and the cold of winter. Important also is the fact that they became accustomed to the elements of the unpredictable climate. Nevertheless, variances of climatic conditions must be emphasized and re-emphasized in order to understand the growth and development of the Catholic Church upon the prairies, or for that matter of colonization, farming, and cattle ranching.

A factor directly concerned with, and in a large part brought about by the climate, was the fur trade. Furs had become very fashionable in Europe after the discovery of the North American continent. Due to the abundance of fur in the Upper Missouri region, many adventurers were attracted to the area as private trappers or as employees of one of the large fur companies. As long as the European market remained stable, the fur trade prospered. For example, in 1832 the annual income derived from skins at Fort Union, one

of the Missouri River trading posts, may be approximated from the following account:

1. Beavers: about 25,000 skins. They are sold in packs of 100 lb. weights each, put up separately, and tied together. There are, generally, about sixty large skins in a pack; if they are smaller, of course, there are more skins. A large beaver skin weighs about two pounds--sometimes more. The usual price is four dollars a pound.

2. Otters: 200 to 300 skins.

3. Buffalo cow skins: 40,000 to 50,000.
Ten buffalo hides go to the pack.

4. Canadian weasel (*Musetella Canadensis*):
500 to 600.

5. Martin (pine or beech martin). about the same quantity.

6. Lynx; the northern lynx (*Felis Canadensis*):
1,000 to 2,000.

7. Lynx, the southern or wild cat (*Felis rufa*):
ditto.

8. Red Foxes: 200 to 300

9. Cross Foxes: 200 to 300

10. Silver foxes: twenty to thirty. Sixty dollars are often paid for a single skin.

11. Minks (*Hustela vison*): 200.

12. Musk-rats (*Ondathra*): from 1,000 to 100,000.

According to Captain Black, half a million of these skins are annually imported into London, as this animal is found in equal abundance as far as the coasts of the Frozen Ocean.⁵

The fur companies employed a large number of men as trappers or as traders. These men, called engage's, were generally of French-Canadian parentage and of the Catholic faith. In order to carry on an effective trade with the savages, it was necessary for them to live with the Indians in their encampments. Because of this factor, one can best evaluate the influence they had upon the Indians by the actual life they lived. They often became in way of life,

⁵Maximilian, XXII, pp. 380-81.

and even in character, as much an Indian as they were white. They inter-married with the Indian women and learned the Indian language and culture. They also imparted to the savages, many of the customs, languages, and religion of the white man. Over a period of years, a merging of the two cultures gradually evel'ed. Although we have no evidence of the actual influence these men had upon the Indians, there is little doubt that the natives gained their first knowledge of the Christian religion from the engage's. These French-Canadian Catholics, often demanded the presence of a missionary to baptize and educate their children and, to obtain a priest, they often approached their superiors. Such, in part, was the case in the establishment of the first Catholic mission in what is now North Dakota. In return for these favors, the engage's were ready to be of service to the clergy in the study of the Indian language.⁶

As the fur trade developed, the large fur companies erected an elaborate system of posts, as a means of carrying on trade. The early posts became the medians between the culture of the whites and that of the aborigines. The Indians frequently pitched their leathern homes just outside the gates of the posts, where much of the fur trade was carried on. Prince Maximilian of Wied gives us an excellent description of the company post at Fort Union in the 1830's:

⁶Grace L. Nute, Documents Relating to Northwest Missions 1818-1827 (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1942), p. 56.

The fort itself forms a quadrangle, the sides of which measure about eighty paces in length, on the exterior. The ramparts consist of strong pickets, sixteen or seventeen feet high, squared, and placed close to each other, and surmounted by a chevaux de frise. On the south-west and north-east ends, there are blockhouses, with pointed roofs, two stories high, with embrasures and some cannon, which, though small, are fit for service. In the front of the enclosure, and towards the river, is the well-defended principal entrance, with a large folding gate, opposite the entrance, on the other side of the quadrangle, is the house of the commandant; it is one story high, and has four handsome glass windows on each side of the door. The roof is spacious, and contains a large, light, loft. This house is very commodious, and like all the buildings of the inner quadrangle, constructed on poplar wood, the staple wood for building in this neighborhood. In the inner quadrangle are the residences of the clerks, the interpreters, and the "engage", the powder magazine, the stores, or supplies of goods and bartered skins, various workshops for the handicraftsmen, smiths, carpenters, etc., stables for the horses and cattle, rooms for receiving and entertaining the Indians; and in the center is the flagstaff, around which several half-breed Indian hunters had erected their leathern tents. A cannon was also placed here, with its mouth towards the principal entrance.⁷

In later years, the posts frequently became sites of permanent communities where the priests were able to get up missions for the Indians. Father Jean De Smet is an example of a missionary who used the Missouri River posts to meet with and instruct the Indians.⁸

The most important consideration to the missionary was the Indian himself. The red man, like the weather, was

⁷Maximilian, XXII, pp. 376-77.

⁸A more thorough study of Father De Smet's role among the Indians of the Missouri River Fur Trading Posts will be taken up in Chapter III.

unpredictable, and showed other character traits equally perplexing to the missionary. Each of the tribes living in the region of what is now North Dakota presented a different set of problems, and the missionary had to understand each before he could claim even a degree of success.

The Sioux, the largest tribe of prairie Indians, were divided into five separate bands or tribes which again were sub-divided into different lodges under separate chiefs.⁹ Their language, although basically the same among all the divisions, had undergone changes which made it difficult for a Sioux from east of the Mississippi to understand the language of one living along the Missouri River. They were also a nomadic war-loving band of savages and this added to the difficulties of dealing with them. The settlers at Lord Selkirk's colony on the Lower Red River spoke of the Sioux as the "Tigers of the Plains" because of this war-like nature.¹⁰ It was not until Father De Smet made his first journey up the Missouri River in 1840, that any work of consequence was done among these people.

The Mandans, who lived along the Missouri River, were by nature more peaceful than were the Sioux. They also were inclined towards a semi-sedentary existence which made missionary work among them comparatively easy.¹¹ Unfortunately,

⁹Tabeau, Narrative, p. 102.

¹⁰George Bryce, The Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists (Toronto: Mission Book Company, 1909), p. 23.

¹¹Maximilian, XXIII, p. 367.

after the smallpox epidemic of the 1830's, their numbers were greatly decreased; thus the need for a resident priest among them was diminished.¹² After some years they were helped only by the brief visitations of Father De Smet and Father Belcourt.

Among the other smaller tribes living along the Missouri were the Gros Ventres, Minitaries, Arikaras, and Crows. They too, showed the missionary many differences in language, customs, and culture.

East of the Missouri, the ". . . Saulteaux, Crees, and Assiniboines formed the bulk of the population of the Red River country at the opening of the nineteenth century."¹³ In language the Saulteaux and the Crees were closely related, while the language of the Assiniboines resembled that of the Teton Dakota.¹⁴ These Indians were much more amenable to instruction in the Christian religion, than were the other Sioux. They lived a nomadic life and were of a friendly nature.

Another element in the population of the Red River country were the Metis, or half-breeds. They were the children, or grandchildren of French traders in alliance with Indian women. They were numerous in this region and had

¹²Pierre J. De Smet, Life, Letters and Travels Among the North American Indians, ed. H. M. Chittenden and A. T. Richardson, 4 vols. (New York: Francis Harper Company, 1905), pp. 650-61.

¹³John P. Pritchett, The Red River Valley 1811-1849 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 14.

¹⁴Maximilian, XXII, p. 393.

taken on many of the vices of the white men, while retaining those of the Indians. They offered a special problem because, while they claimed to be Christians, they often acted otherwise, producing a great challenge to the missionaries.¹⁵

In spite of the differences which existed between the different tribes, many cultural similarities were evident. Generally, they were nomadic and non-agricultural, living almost entirely from the buffalo. The presence of this animal in countless numbers throughout this region, made the Indian's life comparatively easy in spite of climatic conditions, as the buffalo was a docile, slow animal easily killed. The meat, although the most important part of the buffalo, was not the only commodity the Indians gained from the animal.

In truth, she furnishes them not only everything of absolute necessity, but also much that is useful and even superfluous. The flesh is substantial food and one to their liking; the skin serves for loding them as well, and for clothing them in every season; the horns and the bones give them implements and necessary tools; the sinews give them thread; the paunches make their vessels; and the spun wool yields the women ornaments and other superfluities. Finally, there is the head which serves them for household gods.¹⁶

This life of living by the chase often hindered the work of the missionaries, because the Indians did not remain long

¹⁵Rudolph F. Kurz, An Account of His Experiences Among Fur Traders and American Indians on the Mississippi and Upper Missouri Rivers During the Years 1846-1852, ed. John B. Hewitt (Washington, D.C.: United States Printing Office, 1937), p. 79.

¹⁶Tabeau, Narrative, p. 72.

enough in one place to warrant the erection of a mission. The clergy were forced to become nomadic in order to follow the savages in their wanderings over the plains. This sort of life did not appeal to them, and they constantly sought means to induce the Indians to give up their life of wandering and adopt one of agriculture.

Success for the padres was also centered about the character traits of the savages. Had the first clergy before coming to what is now North Dakota read Tabeau's account of the Indians, no doubt they would have tried their luck in another place. Tabeau, full of condemnation, said:

All that one can say is that, if these barbarians leave no doubt that they are human, intelligent beings, it is because they have the form, the face, and the faculty of speech of human beings. Stupid, superstitious, gluttonous, lewd, vindictive, patient by principle, fierce of temper, cowardly with men of like strength, fearless in assassinations, ungrateful, traitorous, barbarous, cruel, lying, thievish, etc. That is, it seems to me, a beautiful national character. . . .¹⁷

Many of the men who visited the plains during the eighteenth century agreed with Tabeau, but they more often attributed these shortcomings to individuals rather than to tribes. If Tabeau had written his impression of the white man of the same day, would it have been filled with less condemnation? Such traits, peculiar to individuals, became the problem of the missionaries. At the base of many of these vices was

¹⁷Ibid., p. 172. Maximilian, in contrast to Tabeau's description of the Indians said, "If man, in all his varieties, has not received from the Creator equally perfect faculties, I am, at least, convinced that in this respect, the Americans are not inferior to the whites." Maximilian, XXIII, p. 23.

liquor, introduced into the Indian encampments by the fur traders. Its effect upon the savages was most unfortunate, causing them to do many things which they would not have done otherwise. Under the influence of firewater, any one of the vices described by Tabeau could appear, and often did.

Lastly, the missionaries had to be aware of the Indian's religious ideas. It is difficult to describe these beliefs, for they varied with the individual. Certain basic concepts were characteristic of all the Indians living in the Great Plains. These savages were not adept at working out a profound metaphysical theology, but they did have certain standards governed by a great spirit. Such things as the sun, moon, stars, buffalo, Milky Way, and many other objects were adored and offered sacrifice.¹⁸ The Gros Ventre had:

The sun, or as they call it, "the sun of the day," (which) is considered as a great medicine. They do not know what it is really, but that it serves to sustain and to warm the earth. When they are about to undertake some enterprise, they make offerings to it. . . .¹⁹

Mixed throughout their religious beliefs was a degree of superstition which governed so many of their actions. Almost any phenomenon in nature became an omen of good or evil to them, and "to attempt to convince them of their folly was labor lost."²⁰ This superstition was carried into almost

¹⁸Ibid., p. 199.

¹⁹Maximilian, XXIII, p. 373.

²⁰Ibid., XXIV, p. 34.

every phase of their lives, as pointed out by Maximilian of Wied:

They undertake nothing without first invoking their guardian spirit, or medicine, who mostly appears to them in a dream. When they wish to choose their medicine, or guardian spirit, they fast for three or four days, and even sacrifice joints of their fingers; howl and cry to the lord of life, or to the first man, beseeching him to point out their guardian spirit. They continue in this excited state till they dream and the first animal or other object which appears to them is chosen for their guardian spirit or medicine.²¹

This problem of superstition mixed with a religious belief caused great difficulties to the missionary. It was almost impossible for him to convince the savages of their error, and to change their beliefs to those of Catholicism. It took all his energy and intelligence to make the savage susceptible to the Christian religion.

Before the missionaries could hope for success, the Indian culture had to be modified. The story of how these devoted priests changed the savages into Christians has a large place in the history of the missionaries' work in North Dakota.²²

²¹Ibid., XXIII, p. 318.

²²This map provides the reader with a variety of information. It has the principle rivers and their tributaries. It has the different fur trading posts and army forts listed. The map also has the location of the major Indian nations. This map was obtained from the University of Washington's map collection.



CHAPTER II

PEMBINA: AN OUTPOST ON THE RED RIVER

In 1818, the first Catholic mission in the present state of North Dakota was opened by two secular priests sent out from Quebec. A mission in this remote region, so far distant from the population centers of the east, was a result of a plea by the Governor of Lord Selkirk's recently established colony on the Red River. Governor Macdonell, a Scottish Catholic, became concerned over the irreligion of the Indians, and the bloodshed and destruction caused by the rivalry between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Northwest Company. Of some importance to the establishment of the first mission, is the political and economic setting due to the rivalry between the two fur companies. During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Red River Valley of the North became the scene of bitter conflict between these companies. Both firms came to the area because of the diminishing numbers of furs and to expand their operations. Antagonism arose when the Northwest Company would not recognize the "Bay" Company's claim to a monopoly of the fur trade in this region, and sought to destroy the

competitor by means of a price war.¹

The Northwest officials lowered the price of fur until it nearly ended in the destruction of the Bay Company as well as their own firm. To add to the problem, the Napoleonic Wars raging in Europe, practically destroyed the market for pelts on the continent. When the War of 1812 broke out, the situation became critical because it further hindered the fur trade by the non-exportation decrees. The combination of these events drove down the price of shares in the Bay Company to the lowest level in a century.²

While the fur war was raging in America, a Scottish student, Thomas Douglas, became concerned over the suffering of people in his homeland, and started plans for a colony in the interior of Canada.³ During his days as a student, he observed an extension of the English Agricultural revolution into his native land. He saw the eviction of hundreds of land tenants in order to make way for large cattle and sheep enclosures. Douglas heard the dissatisfied farmers speak of immigration after trying their hand in the sweat shop of the

¹William Schooling, The Governor and Adventurers of English Trading in Hudson Bay (London: Hudson's Bay Company, 1920), p. 37. In the use of the word "Bay," the reader should keep in mind that it refers to the full title--The Hudson's Bay Company.

²George Bryce, Mackenzie, Selkirk, and Simpson, (Makers of Canada Series, Vol. IX) New York: Oxford University Press, 1926, pp. 190-191.

³John P. Pritchett, The Red River Valley 1811-1849 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), p. 20.

industrial cities. As he stood by observing these events, he decided "that emigration was an unavoidable result of the general state of the country," and "was the only solution to a bad situation."⁴ Unfortunately, he lacked the necessary capital and influence to undertake a scheme as far-reaching as a colony. In 1799, however, he inherited his father's title, Fifth Earl of Selkirk, and his small fortune, which gave him an opportunity to pursue his ambitions with new hope for success.⁵

Selkirk realized the inability of private initiative to maintain a colony, because of the great expenses it entailed. In 1808, he turned to the stock market and the purchase of shares in the Hudson's Bay Company. Due to the low price of stock, he purchased the controlling interest in the firm at a cost within his means.⁶ Through his control of the Board of Directors, he was able to influence the Company's policies, and particularly its stand on colonization.

After exerting his power, Selkirk obtained a grant of 116,000 acres in Rupert's Land, for the purpose of establishing a colony.⁷ In order to obtain the colonial grant from the directors, however, he had to guarantee them that a

⁴Ibid., p. 21.

⁵Louis A. Wood, The Red River Colony (Chronicles of Canada, Vol. XXI, Toronto: Glasgow, Brook and Company, 1922), p. 14.

⁶Pritchett, Red River Valley, p. 37.

⁷Wood, The Red River Colony, p. 33.

colony would not hinder the fur trade in that region.

After Selkirk had gained the land, he had to find a group of people willing to undertake the colonization. By July, 1811, he had gathered a number of Scottish and Irish colonists, and was ready to depart for the Red River region of interior British America.⁸ They reached the Company's post at Fort Douglas in August, after an uneventful Atlantic crossing.⁹

Macdonell, Selkirk's choice for governor of the new colony, notified the Earl that lack of food at Fort Douglas would not allow the colonists to remain there.¹⁰ He reported that buffalo were numerous in the vicinity of the Indian encampments at the conflux of the Pembina and Red Rivers, and that he had ordered a group of the settlers to move to a location on the Pembina River. Macdonell selected a site, calling it Fort Daer in honor of Selkirk.¹¹

The Northwest Company, in the meantime, had been watching the settlers' movements. This group of potential farmers meant only one thing to the Northwest'ers, an intensification of the war against the Hudson's Bay Company. They felt that the establishment of a colony would injure

⁸Ibid., p. 53.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Mary A. Norton, Catholic Missionary Activities in the Northwest, 1818-1864 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of American Press, 1930), p. 19.

¹¹Ibid., p. 20.

the fur trade of the region, and destroy it as the colonies spread. Officials of the Northwest Company issued a statement to the people of Great Britain, stating the disadvantages of a colony in this remote region. They claimed that transportation problems would isolate the colonists, and eventually leave them susceptible to the warlike savages roaming about the region. They stated that the colony was established on soil, which would become American. They argued that to "encourage emigration to the Red River, is to sacrifice the superfluous population of Great Britain and to injure her American colonies."¹² The report was not effective. The English populace knew very little about the interior of British America, and probably cared less. Failing in their purpose to check or retard colonization by circulating unfavorable literature in England, the Northwest Company turned its attention to the colony itself. In 1814, and again in 1816, employees of the company destroyed the Pembina colony and scattered its inhabitants.¹³ In January, 1817, Selkirk returned to America and took positive actions to end the bloodshed and destruction caused by the violence of the Northwest Company. He organized a group of men and besieged the Northwest posts. By taking control of the forts, Selkirk was able to bring the rivals to terms, and

¹²Pritchett, Red River Valley, p. 54.

¹³John Shanley, "The Founding of Catholic Church in North Dakota," (Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Vol. II, Bismarck Tribune, 1908), p. 5.

end this small revolution on the Red River.¹⁴

Macdonell, concerned over the outbreaks of violence committed by the Northwest Company, felt the need of a stabilizing force in this land where no law existed. He petitioned the Bishop of Quebec, Reverend Plessis, to send a missionary to the colony. His arguments were interesting:

You know, monseigneur, that there can be no stability in the government of states of the kingdom unless religion is made the corner stone. The leading motive of my first undertaking, the management of that arduous to laudable enterprise, was to have made the Catholic religion the prevailing faith of the establishment, should Divine Providence think me a worthy instrument to forward the design. The Earl of Selkirk's liberal mind readily acquiesced in bringing along with me the first year a priest from Ireland. . . our spiritual wants increase with out members. . . A vast religious harvest might also be made among the natives around us, whose language is that of the Algonquins of this country, and who are very tractable and well-disposed considering the corruption of morals introduced among them by opposition traders in the free indulgence of spirituous liquors and other corruptive habits.¹⁵

Plessis was not ready to send a permanent missionary to the colony, but did agree to send an envoy to investigate the possibilities of establishing a mission in the future. Tabeau, the parish priest of Boucherville, Canada, was Plessis' envoy. He reported, after an extensive investigation, a permanent mission was not advisable until the trouble between the two companies came to an end.¹⁶ Some encourage-

¹⁴Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁵Nute, Documents, pp. 4-5.

¹⁶Shanley, "founding of Catholic Church," p. 6.

ment, however, was given by the Bishop in a letter to Mr. Dechambault, an official of the Hudson's Bay Company, when he stated his desire to assist the Red River Colony in its spiritual needs as soon as the two companies settled their differences.¹⁷

Selkirk, after the Bishop's decision to delay the establishment of a mission, found it advisable to follow up Macdonell's letter with a personal plea. In a letter to the Bishop, he claimed he was "fully persuaded of the infinite good which might be effected by a zealous and intelligent ecclesiastic among those people, in whom the sense of religion is now almost entirely lost." He, although not a Catholic himself, apparently recognized the mollifying influence a missionary would have upon the colony. He knew that over one-half of the colonists were Catholic, and that the French-Canadian engages were largely adherents to the faith. For these reasons, therefore, he apparently felt that a Catholic would assist him in keeping the colonists together.¹⁸

The settlers at Pembina were informed that their needs had received the official approval of Lord Selkirk. They then wrote a petition to Plessis requesting a missionary. In this plea they set forth eloquently their needs:

The undersigned inhabitants of the Red River Colony state very humbly: That though they are

¹⁷Nute, Documents, p. 19.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 6.

called free, they have not enough influence to keep their children from being taken and forced to obey those who have soiled the plains of this beautiful country with the blood of their friends and fellow-citizens. But that this influence never would have filled them, and never would have been necessary, if they had had better knowledge of their duty toward God and society.¹⁹

This petition to the Bishop, undoubtedly influenced him in his later decision to send two priests and a catechist to the settlement. It also influenced Lord Selkirk, who felt the pressure exerted by the colonists.

In 1818, Selkirk, apparently convinced of the benefits to be derived from the presence of a priest at Pembina, rushed a personal representative named Gale to the Quebec Chancellory Office. This man told Plessis everyone agreed that the influence of religion was a requisite for the well-being of the colony.²⁰ Plessis replied that, "No one is more convinced than I of the incalculable benefits that might result from the establishment of a permanent mission in that place. . . ."²¹ The combination of Macdonell, Selkirk, the settlers, and Gale's plea brought positive results.

In 1818, Plessis said he felt, ". . . that the opposition had fired their last round," and that he was now ready to forward two missionaries to the colony.²² He appointed

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 16-17, dated 1817.

²⁰Ibid., p. 23.

²¹Ibid., p. 24.

²²Ibid., p. 26.

Father Joseph Provencher, Father Joseph Dumoulin, and a catechist, Mr. William Edge, to establish the mission.²³ The Bishop called the priests to Quebec and gave them an elaborate set of instructions to be followed in their new assignment. These were so concise and clear in content that anything but quoting them in their entirety would destroy their significance. Plessis told the priests:

1. They are to consider it as the first object of their mission to recall from barbarity and the disorders which are the consequence of it the Savage Nations dispersed over the country.

2. The second object is to direct their labors towards those bad Christians who have there adopted the morals of the savages and live in licentiousness and forgetfulness of their duty.

3. Persuaded that the preaching of the Gospel is the most certain means of obtaining these blessed effects they will lose no opportunity to inculcate its principles and maxims either in their private conversations or public instructions.

4. In order to render themselves more readily useful to the natives of the Country where they are sent they will apply themselves from the moment of their arrival to the study of the savage languages and will endeavor to reduce them to regular principles in such manner as to be enabled to publish a grammar of them after some years residence.

5. They will prepare with all possible expedition the infidel women who live in concubinage with Christians in order to substitute legitimate marriage instead of these irregular unions.

6. They will attach themselves with particular care to the Christian Education of the children, they will establish to that effect Schools and Catechisms in all the villages they shall have an opportunity of visiting.

7. In all distinguishable places whether from their situation from the passage of the Traveller or from the assembling of the Savages they will

²³Norton, Catholic Missionary Activities, p. 21. Provencher, following his appointment, gave up his duties as parish priest at Kamouraska. Dumoulin was newly ordained.

take care to cause to be erected high crosses as taking possession of these several places in the name of the Religion of Jesus Christ.

8. They will often repeat to the people towards whom they are sent how much this Religion severely prescribes peace, mildness, obedience to the Laws as well of the State as the Church.

9. They will make known to them the advantage they have in living under the Government of His Britannic Majesty, they will teach them both by example and precept the respect and fidelity they owe to the Sovereign accustoming them to address fervent prayers to God for the prosperity of His Most gracious Majesty and his august family and Empire.

10. They will maintain a perfect equilibrium between the reciprocal pretentions of the two companies the Northwest and Hudson's Bay remembering that they are exclusively sent for the Spiritual good of the people by the civilization of which the advantage of both companies ought to result.

11. They will fix their residence near Fort Douglas on the Red River, there they will build a Church, a house, a school, etc., they will select for their subsistence the best part of the lands which shall be given them and altho' that River as well as the Lake Winipic where it discharges itself is situated in the territory claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company they will not be less ardent for the salvation of the clerks engaged and the travellers who are in the service of the Northwest Company taking care to convey themselves everywhere they shall be called for the good of Souls.

12. They will give us frequent and regular information of everything that can interest, retard or favour the progress of the mission and if not withstanding the most impartial conduct they shall find themselves disturbed in the exercise of their functions they will not abandon their mission before having received our order.²⁴

Before the three men departed from Lower Canada, Lord Selkirk presented them with a title to twenty-five acres of land for building purposes, and a tract four miles wide and four miles long for the maintenance and upkeep of a school

²⁴Nute, Documents, pp. 60-61.

and church.²⁵ Plessis, wishing to divorce the church from any further trouble between the two fur companies, felt it necessary to have the deed registered in England. With their instructions and deed to the church land in their possession, the three men departed for Selkirk's outpost on the Red River.

After a fifty-eight day journey, the missionaries reached their destination--Fort Douglas, July, 1818.²⁶ Selkirk heard that "The arrival of the Roman Catholic priests in the Red River seems to have diffused general satisfaction among all. . . ."²⁷ The two men were kept busy, at any rate, with the incidentals of arranging for temporary quarters and the formation of plans for a church and school. As winter approached, many of the colonists who had remained, moved up the river to Pembina, because of the ready supply of buffalo in the region.

In September, Dumoulin decided to leave Fort Douglas and spend the winter at Pembina with the settlers who had moved up the river earlier. Although Plessis' instructions specifically stated they were not to settle at Pembina, both Provencher and Dumoulin decided a priest was necessary there. They apparently received a negative assent from the officials of the Bay as there were no objections raised.

²⁵Shanley, "Founding of Catholic Church," p. 8.

²⁶Norton, Catholic Missionary Activities, p. 26.

²⁷Ibid., p. 27.

Provencher told Plessis:

It seems that it is going to become necessary to build a chapel at Pembina River, about thirty leagues from Fort Douglas. Many of the colonists and other freemen have decided to establish there. The climate is said to be more favorable, which seems true from what one hears of the fruits that can be grown there. . . . I think that the place will grow more quickly than this settlement, because, apart from the advantages of climate, there is an abundance of provisions, buffalo always being in the neighborhood.²⁸

Dumoulin arrived at the Pembina settlement September 13, 1818; thus was established the first Catholic mission in the present state of North Dakota.²⁹ He beheld a region vibrantly beautiful, and yet monotonous in its wide expanse. Provencher's own description best portrays the missionary's first impression of the Red River region about Pembina.

The Red River, or rather the country which takes its name from that stream, is truly beautiful; the river is quite wide; it is lined with oaks, elms, ivy, poplar, etc., and back from this fringe of woods are prairies as far as the eye can reach. The soil seems excellent, if one may judge by the harvest of this year; wheat, barley, and potatoes. The wheat and barley are headed. Our land contains sufficient firewood and has prairies back of it. Lumber is scarce, at least that of good quality.³⁰

Provencher's exuberance was premature, for hardship struck the colony in the form of a grasshopper plague late that autumn, before the grain was harvested. Flights of these small insects darkened the skies over Pembina often

²⁸Nute, Documents, pp. 158-159.

²⁹Ibid., p. 158.

³⁰Ibid., p. 132.

between 1818 and 1823, and it was not uncommon for these destructive pests to leave the prairies devoid of grass where they had stopped their flight.³¹ One such visit by the pests caused Dumoulin to exclaim, "The colony was overrun with little grasshoppers. . . which are not only going to take the bread out of our mouths this year, but even almost all the seed. God be praised! We can still eat meat."³² As Dumoulin said, everything would be satisfactory as long as the fresh supply of buffalo remained. But often the grasshoppers would eat or destroy the grass for many miles about Pembina mission, causing the buffalo to go great distances into the interior to find sufficient food. When this displacement occurred, the settlers and Indians in the vicinity of Pembina suffered many hardships.

During the winter of 1819-20, because of the grasshopper attack, the buffalo stayed a "distance" from the settlement.³³ Food remained scarce and the settlers became gaunt from hunger. When lack of food was combined with the extreme cold and blizzards, death often resulted. Bryce, the English historian, described the suffering caused by one such winter in this manner: "Some of the settlers had devoured their dogs, raw hides, leather, and their very shoes. The loss of thirty-one lives cast a spell of despair over the

³¹Ibid., p. 139. Later accounts can be found on pp. 321 and 342.

³²Ibid., p. 246.

³³Ibid., p. 201.

whole colony."³⁴ The spiritual progress was paralyzed during these winters when the buffalo remained a distance from the colony. Dumoulin, apparently in a despondent mood, said, "The severe toil and fatigue of procuring a living have paralyzed the temporal and the spiritual progress of the mission and the whole colony."³⁵ When the settlers and Indians were suffering from lack of food, the missionary could not instruct them. Aside from the lack of needed energy to study, the colony hardly had the perfect atmosphere for religious instructions.

Although the colonists were joyful at the passing of winter, summer in its comparative mildness failed to provide them with a deserved rest. Aside from drought, summer had many dangers to the well-being of the inhabitants. The heat of the summer sun was often intensified by a raging prairie fire. A fire, once started, would sweep across the country with amazing speed. Although the fires never destroyed buildings in Pembina, the fact they were ever present caused great concern among the people. Provencher was greatly concerned over the terrible destruction, of which he gave a vivid account:

It is a dreadful sight to see the fire start in the dry grass, and then be swept along by a strong wind. It travels with astonishing rapidity, and even though there is little to feed it, is sufficient to burn herds of considerable numbers,

³⁴Bryce, Romantic Settlement, p. 150.

³⁵Nute, Documents, p. 342.

which cannot escape its velocity, and which, if they do not die on the spot, survive but a short time.³⁶

It took a certain conscious ability to stay alive at Pembina in the face of the innumerable hardships. The colonists and missionaries constantly sought means to counter-act their difficulties, but with little success. For what could man do when the drought and fires of summer were followed by the extreme cold and blizzards of winter? It took a determined, strong group of people to "stick it out" under conditions such as they experienced at Selkirk's outpost on the Red River.

In spite of the terrible hardships, the missionaries did not become discouraged, but continued with their plans. Both Provencher and Dumoulin diligently applied themselves to the study of the Indian language throughout the year. Dumoulin spent his first winter instructing the Indians in the Catholic religion, as well as in crafts and agriculture. During that same winter, he laid plans for a chapel to be built and financed by the colonists. To Provencher he wrote enthusiastically, "I held a meeting of all the freemen and hunters who have decided to settle at Pembina. I proposed to them the building of a chapel sixty feet by thirty, and a presbytery forty by twenty-seven."³⁷ The combined group formulated the details of the building that same winter.

³⁶Ibid., p. 254.

³⁷Shanley, "Founding of Catholic Church," p. 12.

Their most difficult task was locating sufficient wood to build the structure. They overcame this obstacle when all agreed to assist in cutting timber along the river banks that next spring.

In spite of the hardships, Mr. Edge continued to instruct the settlers and the Metis children. During the winter of 1819-20, he had sixty pupils and as Dumoulin said, "We would have nearly eighty if the buffaloes would come nearer."³⁸ The task of educating the young people of the settlement was always difficult. Often the young boys were called on to assist their fathers in obtaining food. The girls, in the tradition of the Indian family, were kept at home to assist with the household chores. At times, misunderstanding arose between the whites and the Indians which caused difficulties in the non-segregated school. Nevertheless, the missionaries were able to accommodate most of the children of the mission. In order to do this, they established another school before 1823.

While working among the people of the settlement, Dumoulin realized climate was not the only obstacle in the path of success. Spirits in the form of alcohol, diverse tongues, and the vast prairies afflicted the young idealist. In a letter full of dissatisfaction, Dumoulin told Bishop Plessis:

. . . their diverse language which we do not

³⁸Nute, Documents, pp. 178-179.

understand; their unfortunate habit of living isolated lives; the vast territory that would be necessary to cover in order to come in contact with all of them; and the detestable liquor that the traders give them from time to time.³⁹

Bishop Plessis answered Dumoulin in a manner which contrasts the young idealistic Red River missionary with his older realistic superior. Dumoulin's dissatisfaction sounded like a young schoolteacher's plea for more outside reading. Plessis, on the other hand, wrote a deliberate answer full of understanding:

To stop the sale of rum, to gather the Indians into villages, to have Catholic Magistrates are three matters as desirable as they are difficult to obtain. As to the first; From the settlement of Canada laws have been enacted against the sale of intoxicating liquors; and they have often been re-enacted, but to no purpose; As the second; It has been acknowledged in Lower Canada that the gatherings of Indians in villages is more disastrous than beneficial to them, unless the civil authorities give the missionaries boundless authority over them, and unless whites are not allowed among.⁴⁰

Dumoulin, as were the later missionaries of Pembina, was to learn that his most stirring sermon on the use of liquor would not change many of those selling or buying it. He, too, was to learn that long hours of teaching the Indians agricultural methods would not change them from their nomadic life. Dumoulin, of course, could not see that these very problems would hinder and frustrate the work of missionaries in the present state of North Dakota for decades.

³⁹Ibid., p. 156.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 239.

When problems of dogma or theology arose, due to a lack of communication with their superior in Quebec, the young priests were forced to use their better judgment or await an answer from Quebec. Because they lacked the confidence to make a judgment on theological questions, they often chose to postpone a decision until their superior acted on the matter. One such instance was a case concerning the problem of a non-Catholic woman and a Catholic man who had lived together unmarried for years. When the missionaries arrived in Pembina, the man wished to receive the blessing of the Church.⁴¹ Another question concerned the punishment of an engage, who, upon the demand of his employer, added water to the alcohol of the Indians. The engage was unaware of the wrong committed, but felt the generally accepted customs of the region absolved him from any guilt in the eyes of the State or his God.⁴² This problem was also referred to the Chancellory office in Quebec.

It was a pleasant relief for Dumoulin, after confronting problems of dogma and physical hardships, that the two rival fur companies remained peaceful. Both the Northwest and the Hudson's Bay Companies had cooperated with the missionaries in their work, and apparently had an unwritten peace pact after 1817.⁴³ Dumoulin felt some apprehension, however, at the rumor that a Protestant missionary was

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 110-171.

⁴²Ibid., p. 170.

⁴³This was evidenced in the region after Selkirk used force in 1817.

coming to Pembina.

In 1819, the Hudson's Bay Company, in cooperation with the Mission Society of the Church of England, arranged for an Anglican missionary for the Pembina colony. Selkirk, apprehensive of the attitude of the Catholic missionaries, urged Plessis to send a set of instructions to the priests at Pembina, ". . . to extinguish all the sentiments of jealousy and hatred on the subject of religious differences . . ."⁴⁴ Mr. West, the Society's appointee, arrived from England in January, 1821. Although Dumoulin had not seen West, he received an account of him and of his future plans from the Metis. In his communique to Plessis, Dumoulin commented:

The Protestant minister who is at St. Boniface is apparently endowed with many moral virtues, he receives considerable encouragement from the Society of Missions in England; it is said he can draw as much as ten thousand pounds a year from it. His plans, as he announced it upon his arrival, to take in as many as five hundred boarding school pupils, to whom he would give instruction gratis, as well as food and clothing. But it was necessary to make certain promises in order to make his arrival more noticeable. I have not yet seen him, but I have heard quite a good deal about him; I think he is pleased with me. He sent me word by the Governor to ask Mr. Destroismasion to be good enough to teach him French, promising to teach him English in return. I have advised Mr. Destroismasion to try to make use of him to learn English, but in such a way as not to teach him French, since he will know it only too soon, no doubt.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 260.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 286-287.

Mr. West opened a school, for a few of the children of the colonists and Metis, as a start in his gigantic program. Time was to prove his program of educating five hundred children a failure. West's form of idealism characterized many of the missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant. He was full of energy and enthusiasm, but lacking in an understanding of the conditions under which he was to work.

The enthusiasm shown by both groups tended to create a spirit of competition and suspicion, but they did, at least outwardly, maintain friendly relations. The Catholic clergy were fearful West would receive special considerations from the fur companies. Their suspicion was intensified when it was rumored about the colony that West was to receive the abandoned Hudson's Bay post at Pembina, after the two companies combined in 1821. Dumoulin felt that with West in control of the post, his work would be greatly retarded if not destroyed.⁴⁶ His suspicion and apprehension became insignificant when news reached the colony of the United States-Great Britain boundary settlement of 1818.

There was considerable concern at Pembina about the location of the post. By a convention in 1818 between the United States and Great Britain, the boundary was set at the forty-ninth parallel North Latitude.⁴⁷ Before this, no one at Pembina knew exactly where this line would run, but a

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 329.

⁴⁷Shanley, "Founding of Catholic Church," pp. 16-17.

survey showed Pembina was south of it, and within the territory of the United States. Apparently, the Catholic missionaries had not considered the implications of the treaty of 1818, when they founded their mission at Pembina. When the question did arise, they still regarded themselves under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Quebec and the English Crown. In accordance with this assumption, Dumoulin continued with his ministerial work at Pembina. Under the direction of Provencher, he completed the construction of the church, rectory, and school.⁴⁸ This continuation of the building program troubled Plessis, who remained cautious about Pembina's location. He advised Dumoulin, ". . . now it is certain that the Forks is to the North of this degree of latitude, and it is probable that Pembina is South of it, consequently in the United States, and beyond my jurisdiction. That ought to moderate your zeal. . . ."⁴⁹ Both Provencher and Dumoulin realized there could be no moderation in the building program for winter was soon approaching, and the need for adequate housing was imperative.

The uncertainty of Pembina's position and the numerous hardships of living there caused Mr. Edge to request a transfer. Plessis granted him permission to return to Lower Canada in 1820, and replaced him by Mr. John Sauvez.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 12.

⁴⁹Nute, Documents, p. 238.

⁵⁰Norton, Catholic Missionary Activities, pp. 34-35.

Apparently the Bishop felt that the treaty of 1818 would not affect the mission for some time, otherwise he would not have sent Sauvez to Pembina.

When Lord Selkirk died in 1820, the company reverted to the old policy of non-colonization. Many of the company officials thought Pembina was below the line, and this gave them further inducement to abandon it as a colony at the earliest possible time.

The Hudson's Bay Company's chief negotiator, John Halkett, brother-in-law of Selkirk and executor of the estate, paid a visit to the settlement in 1822.⁵¹ He explained the Company's view that Pembina was below the boundary line, and urged that the mission be abandoned immediately. Provencher was in Quebec when Halkett made his inspection tour and the two did not meet. Halkett, however, left a letter with Dumoulin stating the Company's wishes for a speedy abandonment of the colony. In his letter he condemned the missionaries for establishing a church and school at Pembina when the one at the Forks, one hundred miles to the north, was not yet completed. Halkett also reported to Plessis that the mission must be abandoned. He asked the ecclesiastical head of the mission to bring this about quickly. Plessis informed the executor that he would do his utmost to promote the wishes of the Company.⁵² But Provencher,

⁵¹Pritchett, Red River Valley, pp. 234-35.

⁵²Nute, Documents, p. 343.

who had been raised to the office of Bishop of Julipolis while in Quebec, was not willing to bow before the demands of Halkett. He apparently realized that the mission must be abandoned, but disputed Halkett's demand that it be moved that year. He told the executor that the approaching winter rendered the evacuation of the mission impossible until spring. This position he made clear in a sharp letter to Halkett.

I realize that the reasons which you have for abandoning this post are good, but the thing is not so easily put into execution as you think, at least all of a sudden; however perhaps it can be done by degrees; such a migration is utterly impossible this year, because no one will be in a hurry to come to the Forks, when it is evident that he will die of starvation there.⁵³

Halkett made no reply to Provencher but wrote a harsh letter to Plessis in which he condemned the work of the missionaries at Pembina.

Upon this subject I may also be permitted frankly to express my opinion, that the Roman Catholic Mission at the Red River, having so long left unfinished their church at the Forks, having permitted their intended house of residence there to continue incomplete and dismantled to the present moment, having established no schools, nor attempted any improvement of settlement of the extensive grant of lands given them by Lord Selkirk, they ought never to have set about building and completing a distant church and residence at Pembina. The measure which they thus hastily and prematurely adopted has unfortunately tendered (sic) to unhinge and disperse the Red River population, and it has evidently served but to encourage half-breeds and others to continue that idle and disorderly mode of life to which I am sorry to say they are

⁵³Ibid., p. 358.

at present but too generally addicted.⁵⁴

Plessis responded diplomatically to Halkett's letter with a defense of the missionaries, and their work among the colonists and Indians of Pembina. He admitted that the original plans were for but one colony, that of the Forks; but due to conditions then, it was necessary for part of the settlement to move up the river closer to the buffalo herds. Plessis made it clear to Halkett that the officials of the Hudson's Bay Company at the Forks made no objections to the settlement of Pembina in 1818. In fact, they urged it by making it clear that food would be more plentiful at the southern colony. In closing, he pledged his support and co-operation in the closing of Pembina that next spring.

The population of this thriving community which had "perhaps as many as five hundred men, women, and children, was unhappy and bitter when Dumoulin and Provencher asked them to start their evacuation that spring in 1823. Many of the colonists responded to the plea and moved down the river to the Forks; however, a few of the Scotch and Irish settlers and Metis remained as squatters.⁵⁵

In vacating the mission after five years of labor, the missionaries could look back at their accomplishments

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 368. In contrast to Halkett's view, Sir George Simpson, an official of the Hudson's Bay Company, said, "It is to the Catholic Mission we are alone indebted for the safety of the Company's establishment and the place of the Colony. . . ." Pritchett, Red River Valley, pp. 234-35.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 290.

and feel that they had done something of importance. Dumoulin, who had spent the majority of the time at Pembina, planned and constructed a church, school, and rectory. He and Provencher had baptized over eight hundred adults and children. Dumoulin said, ". . . one hundred twenty marriages had been celebrated or rehabilitated. . . ." The groundwork had been laid for a far more extensive program of education. Dumoulin wrote a great number of people were preparing themselves for baptism or Communion at the time he departed. He was pleased that ". . . several Protestants had abjured their errors and had returned to the Holy Church. . . ." ⁵⁶ Aside from the positive results, the missionaries performed many services to the inhabitants. They apparently offered a stabilizing influence to the settlement, and gave encouragement to those ready to abandon the colony in face of the untold hardships.

Thus ended the first mission in the present state of North Dakota. Dumoulin left the Red River Valley, as Provencher said, ". . . without much regret and it is better or just as well he should leave this since he cannot make up his mind to stay on permanently." ⁵⁷ The influence of the missionaries lived on through the occasional visits of the clergy from St. Boniface. Twenty-five years were to elapse before Pembina would have a permanent Catholic missionary to serve its spiritual needs.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 415.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 401.

CHAPTER III

AN INTERLUDE: 1823-1848

Pembina's closing in 1823 began an interlude of twenty-five years before another mission was opened in what is now North Dakota. During this period, however, the activities of the church did not cease. A different type of missionary work was carried on by brief visitations of clergy, some of whom came from St. Boniface, Canada, and others from the new Jesuit headquarters at St. Louis, Missouri.

Those coming from St. Boniface worked among the settlers, half-breeds, and Indians in and around Pembina, and the region to the west. Father Destroismasion was the first of the Canadian clergy to visit Selkirk's outpost after the Hudson's Bay Company moved its interests to the north of the border. He had served as assistant in Pembina before it was abandoned, and had become acquainted with many of the settlers and the region about the settlement. After the mission was abandoned, the Bishop of St. Boniface sent him up the Red River to keep the settlers interested in their religion. In 1824, Provencher relates, "Mr. Destroismasion is the same as ever. He has made the Pembina trip several

times since Dumoulin's departure."¹ Although we have no record of his short visits, his work at the mission was apparently negligible, because he did not remain there for any appreciable amount of time.

Destroimasion was followed by John Harper, who visited the settlement for a short time during the winter of 1827-28. Harper, the first priest ordained in the diocese of Julipolis, left St. Boniface for Pembina a week before Christmas.² His work at the mission was little more than another attempt to assure the settlers of future visits by the clergy from St. Boniface. In his contact with the people of the region, Harper heard reports of their desire to gain a resident priest from the Bishop of New Orleans. Provencher was concerned over the settlers' attitude, and related Harper's story to Bishop Panet.³ He considered it unfortunate that the settlers could not be accommodated, but no solution could be reached so long as clergy were difficult to obtain even in metropolitan centers. So it was the settlers were forced to be content with the short visitations of priests from St. Boniface.

Between the time Harper visited Pembina and the time Father Belcourt arrived in 1848, other priests from St. Boniface visited the settlement. Among them were Fathers

¹Nute, Documents, p. 419.

²Shanley, "Founding of Catholic Church," p. 20.

³Nute, Documents, p. 420.

Mayrand, Boucher, Poire, Thibault, Barveau, Lafleche, Tache, Bourassa, Fararaud, and a lay brother called "Dube".⁴ These priests undoubtedly were frustrated in their work of administering to the people below the border when time permitted only short visits. A visit was merely an opportunity to assure the colonists that a priest would come from time to time.

At the same time that the secular clergy from St. Boniface were crossing the border from Canada, the Jesuits were approaching present day North Dakota from the south and west.

In 1840, when Fathers Pierre Jean De Smet and Christian Hoecken visited the tribes of Mandans, Minitarries, Arikara, and Sioux Indians, a new influence entered the activities of the Catholic Church in this region. They were the first Jesuits to visit the region since before the founding of Pembina mission in 1818. De Smet, the most outstanding Jesuit who visited this region, will be examined at some length.

In 1801, about the time Napoleon was making inroads into the great centers of Europe, another conqueror, Peter John De Smet, was born in Termonde, Belgium.⁵ De Smet was destined to be as tireless and successful as the man who governed him and his family for so many years. Young Peter

⁴Shanley, "Founding of Catholic Church," pp. 21-22.

⁵De Smet, Life, Letters and Travels, p. 1.

was destined to become a conqueror of great repute, but he was to conquer souls instead of empires. In a sense he was also to become a master of empires. For by his long and extended travels throughout the Great American Desert, the Rockies, and the "Inland Empire," he was to become a spiritual emperor of those vast tracts of land. The peculiar, almost mystical, hold he had over the Indians of this Great Northwest was to give him legion after legion from Council Bluffs, in present day Iowa, to the mouth of the Columbia River in Oregon. Among the thousands of Indians in this region who shouted ". . . the black-gown! The black-gown has come!", he was held in high esteem.⁶

De Smet was born into a family of position in the little town of Termonde. His first years were spent under the quiet influence of his home, where nothing of significance ever occurred. It was about the time he entered a free school in Termonde that some of the qualities which were to be so much a part of this man came forth. From the time he entered this school until he entered Mechlin Seminary, near Ghent, he portrayed the restless, adventurous, individualistic spirit that was to be so dominant in his life as a missionary along the Missouri River. His brother, Francis, gives us an excellent description of De Smet, as he knew him in Belgium; ". . . from childhood he was endowed with a

⁶Pierre J. De Smet, Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters (New York: P. J. Kenedy Excelsior Catholic Publishing House, 1858), p. 37.

strong and vigorous constitution; he was hardy, adventurous, and indifferent to danger and yet with a nature of one affectionate, gentle, and generous."⁷ After spending some rousing years at a number of Prep schools he turned his thoughts towards the priesthood, entering Mechlin Seminary in 1820. Here he met Father Nerinckx, a Jesuit Missionary from Kentucky, who was in Belgium soliciting aid and priests for the people of western United States. The missionary spoke to the gathered Mechlin seminarians of the need for young men to cross the Atlantic and become missionaries among the Indians and whites of the Great West.⁸ At this time, anything west of the Allegheny Mountains was considered part of the west. The plea reached the ears of young De Smet, who apparently in the same instance made the decision to go abroad. The glamor of new unconquered lands with thousands of souls waiting the coming of a priest apparently appealed to him. De Smet was among the nine novitiates who volunteered their services to the conversion of these heathen souls.⁹ Without giving their parents the respect and courtesy of a personal farewell, the nine men departed August 15, 1821, on the ship Columbia.¹⁰ Peter was not yet twenty-one years

⁷E. Laveille, The Life of Father De Smet 1801-1873 (New York: P. J. Kenedy Excelsior Catholic Publishing House, 1915), p. 6.

⁸Ibid., p. 12.

⁹Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁰H. E. Robinson, A Missouri Missionary (An address delivered before the Old Settlers and Kansas City Historical Society, May 11, 1905) Maryville, Missouri: Sign of Republican, 1905, p. 7.

old when he abruptly bid farewell to his homeland and parents. His letter of farewell to his family gives us some indication of the anguish he suffered at leaving without a last visit:

. . . It was a bitter trial that I felt, deterred from telling you of my departure and my future plans, and to be obliged to leave without your blessing has caused me cruel suffering. I was convinced that you would never consent to my departure, and for this reason and upon the advice of a wise and disinterested man, I decided to leave without seeing you. Conquer your sorrow, my dear father, and say to yourself the All-Powerful has decided this affair. . .¹¹

His purpose for leaving, no doubt, took on new proportions as a result of the sacrifice it entailed in leaving his family--possibly never to see them again.

When the group of young novitiates arrived in Philadelphia, they pressed on to Baltimore and the Jesuit Novitiate of Whitemarsh to continue their academic work.¹² During 1822, news circulated about the Whitemarsh Seminary that the order was planning a new mission in the west. Bishop Du Bourg of New Orleans had asked the order to assist him in establishing a school in his diocese in order to accommodate the demands of the half-breeds for a Christian education.¹³ The next year, the superior of Whitemarsh decided to comply with the Bishop's wishes. He asked for volunteers, and De Smet was one of the first to offer his services. When in the early spring of 1823, the young

¹¹Laveille, De Smet, p. 21.

¹²Ibid., p. 23.

¹³Ibid., p. 31.

missionary was accepted, he exclaimed, "Thank God I am one of these chosen. . . ."14 The novitiates arrived in St. Louis in May, and proceeded to Florissant, the site given to them by the Bishop of New Orleans. Between the period of their arrival and De Smet's ordination in 1827, the young priest busied himself with the study of the Indian language.¹⁵ Because of the headway he made in this academic undertaking, he was appointed professor of English in the new school at Florissant for the Indian children.

He served as instructor of English at Florissant until 1829, when the school was moved to St. Louis. In St. Louis he added to his duties the position of Procurator for the small settlement of Jesuits.¹⁶ His superior, in drastic need of funds, sent De Smet back to Europe to solicit money for the expansion of their young school.¹⁷ While in Europe he was able to collect eight thousand dollars, hundreds of books, and many religious vessels.¹⁸ After spending a number of years on the continent, he returned to the United States in 1837, to take up the duties as pastor of the Council Bluffs mission.¹⁹

¹⁴Ibid., p. 32.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 46.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁹Gilbert J. Garraghan, The Jesuits of Middle United States (New York: America Press, 1938) II, p. 67.

In Council Bluffs, he had his first real contact with the Indians, observing, "I tremble when I think of the great qualities an apostolate to the Indians demands. We must make men before making Christians, and such work requires unlimited patience and solid virtue. . ."²⁰ His resolution was strengthened by a visit of the Salish and Flathead Indians. He undertook this missionary work at the solicitation of these Indians who lived in the Bitter Root Mountains of Montana. These Indians had learned of Christianity from the fur traders and the Iroquois Indians who had been brought to their country as captives. In 1840, when replaced by Father Hoecken, De Smet commenced his long career as the Missionary of the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountain regions of western United States.

Father De Smet made many trips to the Rocky Mountains and the great Oregon country. Most of these were by way of the Missouri River between Fort Benton, the head of navigation, and St. Louis. They began in 1840, and continued until 1870. While his main missionary activities were in the Rocky Mountains, he did make numerous visits to the prairie region of what is now North Dakota. The majority of his trips were by boat on the Missouri, the main passageway to and from the Rockies. His influence in North Dakota is largely centered in the steamship refueling stations, the fur trading posts, and the Army forts located along the

²⁰Ibid., p. 80.

banks of the muddy Missouri. He ordinarily would disembark from a steamer long enough to baptize a few children and care for the sick and dying Indians living near the forts or posts. On one or two occasions during this time, he spent several months among the Indians of this area, usually as a peace maker, but he never took up residence or established a mission among them. De Smet's influence in Nebraska Territory, and later in Dakota Territory, was of a different type from that exerted by the missionaries at Pembina and St. Joseph. They were able, by their residence, to follow up their works of conversion by further education of the savages. De Smet told the Indians what Christianity was, and then proceeded to pour the waters of baptism over their heads. He became a fore-runner of the resident priest by his work of familiarizing the Indians with the general concepts of Christianity. The padres who came in later years, thus had a group of people with some knowledge of the religion they were to preach.

De Smet made use of all the means at his disposal to win the Indians. The Missouri River, either a steamboat or a canoe, his familiar cross and black-gown, and a personality difficult to analyze but radiating and warm, became the tools he used to gain the friendship of the Indians. To the above mentioned devices, he copiously applied the experience gained from previous trips and contacts with the Indians.

On his first visit to the Salish Indians, Father De

Smet, with his companion and guide, Ignatius, and a brigade of fur traders, gained their good will. He also met the Nez Perce before starting his homeward journey. He returned down the Missouri and stopped at Fort Union, where he had his first contact with the Indians of present day North Dakota. The Fort held a special warmth, for he arrived there just ahead of a group of hostile Blackfeet Indians.²¹

De Smet remained there a short time, baptizing a few half-breed and Indian children. He then boarded a steamboat going down the muddy Missouri towards the encampments of the Gros Ventre and Mandan Indians. When he encountered these tribes after three days of floating with the current, the savages rushed toward the vessel with the apparent intent to kill its passengers. When they recognized his black-gown, however, they became friendly. He feasted with these people and promised them he would visit them again in the future, and then continued his journey down the river towards St. Louis.²² With his companions, John Baptiste De Velder, and a Canadian, he reached Council Bluffs late in December. There he had an opportunity to reminisce with Father Hoecken, who had made a trip up the Missouri as far as Fort Union that same summer. On his way up the river, Hoecken stopped at Indian encampments on the Little Missouri, where he baptized thirty-two children. He, like De Smet, was impressed with the need for a mission among the Sioux

²¹Ibid., pp. 103 and 107.

²²De Smet, Life, Letters, and Travels, p. 194.

Indians, but he died before he could make his plans a realization.²³ De Smet soon left his friend and pushed on towards St. Louis, arriving there on New Year's Eve.

In a letter to some friends in Europe after returning from this first journey to the west, De Smet showed interest in returning to the tribes on the Upper Missouri. He said, "A transient visit to some of the tribes of Sioux on the Upper Missouri, on my way back from the Rocky Mountains, left in me an ardent desire to see those poor Indians again. . .²⁴ The vast prairies also impressed De Smet, or at least brought out the aesthetic qualities in him:

To those who pass their days amid the quiet of domestic joys, surrounded by all the delicacies that abundance can produce, a journey through the prairies may appear a bad realization of human misery and suffering; but to the man that elevates himself above earthly and passing things, in order to devote himself to the many unfortunate souls who will love and serve the true God when they know him, such a one can perceive in these privations, in even greater perils and difficulties which may be encountered, only slight annoyances, which he will prefer to all the delights of indolence or the dangers of wealth.²⁵

In 1842, De Smet again visited the American Fur Company Trading Post at Fort Union, on his way down the Missouri. He had come overland from the Rocky Mountains, but was forced, because of the great drought of that year, to abandon his horses there in favor of the river. The horses were

²³Garraghan, Jesuits, pp. 473, 475, 476.

²⁴De Smet, Western Missions, p. 26.

²⁵Ibid., p. 30.

overcome with starvation, as "every sign of vegetation had disappeared" from the prairies. He left Fort Union in a small boat, but three days later was picked up by a steamboat moving towards St. Louis. He was delighted with this change and ". . . accepted with unfeigned gratitude their kind offer of hospitality; the more so, as they assured me that several war-parties were lying in ambush along the river. . . ." In an amused style he continued, ". . . On my entering the boat I was the object of great curiosity--my black gown, my missionary cross, my long hair, attracted attention."²⁶ During the forty-six days it took the steamer to move down the river, he baptized "fifty little ones" at Forts Clark, Pierre, and Vermillion. These "fifty little ones" were to be the last De Smet would baptize for four years in this region.²⁷

It was not until 1846 that De Smet made his third visit to the Indians and half-breeds at Fort Union, always one of his favorite way stations between Fort Benton and St. Louis. "We rested but a day," he wrote, "in which time I baptized five half-breed children."²⁸ These one day rests were characteristic of his movements in the Great Northwest. From Fort Union to Fort Pierre, his journey was difficult because of the unbroken prairie winds tossing his small

²⁶De Smet, Life, Letters, and Travels, p. 401. The fur trading post at Fort Union had passed into the hands of Pierre Chouteau, Jr., but many of the inhabitants spoke of it as the American Fur Trading Post.

²⁷Ibid., p. 402.

²⁸Ibid., p. 604.

vessel about, making every mile a precarious one. As he floated down the river, he started formulating plans for a mission among the Sioux. As he later wrote, "These inhabitants of the desert offer little encouragement to the missionary. I trust and hope that within the course of another year something may be done for these degraded Indians so long left without the aid of religion."²⁹ In 1849, at the request of the Directors of the Association of St. Louis, De Smet wrote a series of articles about his apparent observations while working among the Indians. He was not concerned with feelings, regardless of whose they were, when he formulated his thoughts into this report. He hinted that the United States Government should treat the Indians with the same respect and kindness which would be afforded a foreign power. If the people of the United States were to improve Indian-White relations, the agents of the government would have to put aside all deceit and petty dealings for honest, well-managed affairs.³⁰ "If love instead of deceit was practiced by these men, in a short time we should have the consoling spectacle of a sensible improvement among them. . . ."³¹ He summarized his report to the Association by stating: "The facts--such is at least my opinion--reveal

²⁹De Larme W. Robinson, Notes on Life of Father De Smet (Collections of the State Historical Society of South Dakota, Vol. I, Aberdeen: News Printing Company, 1902), p. 132.

³⁰De Smet, Western Missions, p. 53.

³¹Ibid., p. 54.

clearly the melancholy future which at no very remote epoch awaits these nations, if efficient means are not employed for preventing the woes with which they are threatened."³²

This report was not without praise for some of the white men who lived among the Indians at the different posts and forts along the Missouri. At Fort Pierre, for instance, the missionary praised the officers who had so graciously rendered him assistance in his intercourse with the natives. "I must also add," he wrote, "as a tribute of well-merited gratitude. . . ,"³³ to these men who serve the Indians with the utmost love and interest. He also told the Association that he had baptized several hundred half-breeds and Indians among the Sioux nations which inhabit the region along the Upper Missouri. In pointing out that he could not remain long with any one tribe, he said, "I contented myself with baptizing a great number of their children, and giving the others hope. . . ."³⁴

Although he had spent but nine years among the Indians of this region, he wrote observations as keen as those of a man having spent a life-time there. The actual time spent among the half-breeds and Indians of the Upper Missouri, if computed in years, would hardly be more than three. The Association's members were recipients of a wealth of valuable

³²Ibid., p. 57.

³³Ibid., p. 40.

³⁴Ibid., p. 45.

information, much of which was probably never before recorded.

In 1851, the United States Government, and the Indians living in the Upper Missouri River region, met at Fort Laramie to draw up a treaty. This was necessitated by the land problems then in existence. The Jesuits received an invitation from the Government to be part of their peace commission. De Smet's superior appointed him and Father Hoecken as embassaries to the council. De Smet recorded the circumstances which led to asking the Jesuits to act as mediators:

The Government having resolved to hold a grand council of all the tribes of the Upper Missouri, the Father Provincial (F. Elet) to the urgent request of D. D. Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, sent Reverend Father Christian Hoecken and myself to join the expedition with the view of rendering aid and assistance in our power in furthering the views of the Government among the tribes with whom I had become acquainted.³⁵

The steamship Ange departed from St. Louis, June 7, 1851, with Hoecken and De Smet aboard. Tragedy struck the boat six days out of St. Louis.³⁶ Due to the "inundation of the river, the continual rains of spring, and sudden transitions in heat and cold," many of the passengers were taken with fever. De Smet described the vessel as a "floating hospital" with himself a victim of the fever. He was confined to his cabin in serious condition for many days.³⁷

³⁵Ibid., p. 58.

³⁶³⁷Ibid.^t, Western Missions, p. 60.

³⁷Ibid., p. 63.

Father Hoecken, however, was able to administer to the sick and dying, who demanded his attention both day and night. De Smet and the Captain of the vessel, Mr. La Barge, warned him that if he did not take the necessary precautions, he, too, would contract the disease. In spite of these warnings, Hoecken "seemed to delight" in exposing himself to the dangers of the fever. Captain La Barge warned, "See here, you are killing yourself on this trip. You look like an old man today." Hoecken assured the Captain that he was all right, but this did not satisfy La Barge who asked, "How much sleep did you get?" Hoecken, apparently desiring to end the conversation promptly, answered, "Enough for a Jesuit, Captain La Barge."³⁸

Father Hoecken's lack of respect for his health ended in tragedy.

Between one and two o'clock at night, when all on board were calm and silent, and the sick in their wakefulness heard naught but the sighs and moans of their fellow sufferers, the voice of Father Hoecken was suddenly heard, he was calling me to his assistance. . . Ah me! I found him ill, and even in extremity. He asked me to hear his confession; I at once acquiesced in his desire. . . ."³⁹

Shortly after De Smet heard Hoecken's confession, the sick priest died. It was the nineteenth of June, just twelve days out of St. Louis, that the steamship pulled to shore and buried the remains of Father Hoecken.

³⁸Helene Margaret, Father De Smet Pioneer Priest of the Rockies (New York: Farrar and Rinehart Incorporated, 1940), p. 235.

³⁹De Smet, Western Missions, p. 64.

As the steamship moved up the river, De Smet found the Indian tribes suffering greatly from smallpox and other diseases. As the boat passed the Mandan village, he was particularly concerned with their terrible misfortunes. "This once numerous tribe is now reduced to a few families. . ." because of the ravishes of the smallpox.⁴⁰

Father De Smet was struck with the difference of attitude these Indians in the Upper Missouri regions held toward the church in comparison with the Europeans. In Europe, De Smet said, the priest is forced to "use a thousand means to win auditors; and here men call priests to instruct them."⁴¹ Although the reason for this paradox goes unanswered to this day, Father De Smet no doubt searched his mind for the solution as the vessel churned its way toward Fort Union.

Thirty-seven days of misery, tireless labor, and death had passed since he and Father Hoecken, his now deceased companion, had departed from St. Louis. While at Fort Union, he met with some of the Indians on their way to the council at Fort Laramie, encouraging them to make every possible effort to cooperate in bringing about a peaceful settlement of their problems. . He warned them that their position as a minority demanded that they take full use of such gatherings to make their grievances known to the agents of the United States Government, so as to assure them their rights and

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 76.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 78.

privileges. He also was kept busy with the job of making preparation for the overland journey to the council. Amid his conferences with the Indians and preparations, he found a few moments to baptize twenty-nine children.⁴²

Joseph Kinsey Howard describes the region of western North Dakota and eastern Montana as one of the most desolate regions outside of the southwest desert in the United States.⁴³ The major part of De Smet's journey was through this uninviting country. The route he chose from Fort Union was the Yellowstone Valley to Fort Alexander, then south to the Oregon Trail, and southwest to Fort Laramie. As the group moved into the fort, they saw a thousand lodges, the homes of more than ten thousand Indians who were there to take part in the negotiations.⁴⁴

The council commenced, after the usual smoking of the Calumet and other formalities had been completed. Then came the reading of the preamble of the treaty drawn up by the American agents.

This is a treaty between the agents named on one side by the President of the United States, and on the other by the chiefs and braves of the Indian nations that reside south of the Missouri, east of the Rocky Mountains, and north of the boundary line of Texas and Mexico, viz; the Sioux or Dakota, the Minataries, the Mandans, the Arickaras, the Assin-boines, the Soshonies, and the Crows.

⁴²Ibid., p. 78.

⁴³Joseph K. Howard, Montana, High, Wide and Handsome (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), p. 121.

⁴⁴De Smet, Western Missions, p. 100.

Negotiations continued on for a number of days with each party dealing with the other outside the conference rooms. Father De Smet spoke to the Indians with whom he had come in contact, advising them as to what position they should take with other Indian tribes and the United States Government officials. His main work lay in the fact that he attempted to keep harmony between all the parties, especially the many different Indian tribes, each with its own specific claims. In a negative way, he also was instrumental in the negotiations, for the Indians believed that the Government was dealing honestly with them because of De Smet's presence at the conference. When the deliberations had run their course, the agents drew up the text of a treaty. The four main articles provided for the right of the United States Government to build roads through Indian territory; reparations to the whites for property and life lost at the hands of the Indians; reparations to the Indians for loss of hunting grounds, forests, and property in the form of a "present" of fifty thousand dollars; and finally an annual income of fifty thousand dollars for eighteen years to the Indians along with ". . . aid in objects and tools which may prove useful articles to the Indians. . . ." ⁴⁵ Father De Smet spoke of the unity and harmony that existed throughout the negotiations and signing of the treaty. He was sure the treaty would produce good results if the two parties complied

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

with the provisions. Unfortunately for both parties, the treaty signed in good faith was often violated.

The Indians represented at the conference were so diverse and widely separated that they could not agree upon its meaning. They continued to raid the settlers and gold seekers moving west. They continued to steal horses as they had for generations. Because many of the Indians did not fully understand the provisions of the treaty, they continued to harry roadbuilding operations as a legitimate action against those who trespassed on their hunting grounds. Finally, many of the Indians believed that the treaty did not bind them because they were not present at the negotiations to give their approval to the terms.

On the other hand, the white man continued to cheat and deceive the red man. Indian agents, authorized to distribute the "objects and articles," would take twenty head of cattle and run them around a corral ten times and give them to the Indians as payment in full for two hundred head of cattle. Or they would give them useless or wornout equipment instead of the new provided for by the Government in Washington.⁴⁶ Abuses such as these became common, and caused considerable "hard feelings" among the poorly educated, but not stupid Indians. Politically appointed men would come to the west with a small bank account and return prosperous respectable citizens.

⁴⁶Howard, Montana, p. 116.

Arriving back in St. Louis after the council, Father De Smet reported to his superiors that he had baptized twenty-eight Indians and half-breeds during his stay at Fort Laramie.⁴⁷

In 1854, the Assiniboin Chief, Crazy Bear, upon meeting Father De Smet near Fort Union, told him of the promise made by Indian Commissioner Mitchell at the treaty concerning the presence of a missionary among his people. The chief told De Smet, ". . . all my nation calls aloud for the Black-gown, invite him to come with speed. . . to our encampments."⁴⁸ Father De Smet was pleased at this request. He had run the risk of losing their confidence by his presence at the Treaty of Fort Laramie, but now his fears were alleviated.

Father De Smet's next journey through the prairie country of what is now North Dakota came in 1859. He passed through the region stopping at each of the tribes for two or three days. This trip in '59 was in a spiritual sense the most fruitful of all his journeys into Dakota, for he baptized nine hundred children among the Crows, Assiniboins, Minataries, Mandans, and Arikara Tribes.⁴⁹ He was elated over the benefits and powers these Indians derived from baptism. ". . . how consoling it is," he wrote, "to pour

⁴⁷De Smet, Western Missions, p. 103.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 130.

⁴⁹De Smet, Life, Letters, and Travels, p. 775.

the regenerating waters of baptism on the furrowed and scarred brows of these desert warriors, to behold these children of the plains and forests emerging from that profound ignorance and superstition in which they have been subject for so many ages. . . ."⁵⁰ In spite of the fact that his limited time in each encampment discouraged any instruction, he seemed sure that the holy waters would perform all these functions. De Smet, in statements such as these, expresses the idealism which was so often typical of his fellow apostolates. He was not so idealistic when he wrote of the Indian situation in 1859. There he pointed out:

Since the discovery of America, a system of extermination, of moving the Indians, thrusting them further back, has been pursued by the whites, little by little at first, more and more as the European settlers multiplied and gained strength. At this day, this same policy is marching with great strides: the drama of spoliation has reached its last act, both east and west of the Rocky Mountains. The curtain will soon fall upon the poor and unhappy remnants of the Indian tribes, and they henceforth exist only in history. . . . She (American Republic), ambitions nothing less than extending her dominion from the Atlantic to the Pacific, so as to embrace the commerce of the whole world, and dispute with other mighty nations the glory of pre-eminence. Her object is attained. All bent to her scepter; all the Indian nationality is at her feet.⁵¹

When a man makes a statement as realistic as the above in a time when realism was scoffed at, as it was in the Bureau of

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 125.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 119-120.

Indian Relations, reprisal was certain to follow. Father De Smet's superiors accused him of causing a great deal of harm in the United States, because he portrayed the Government as an agency out to destroy the Red race. They, probably in self defense, claimed his letters were ". . . only imagination and poetry, false and untrue."⁵² De Smet was ready to defend himself against such statements, but when a member of a religious order silence is often the wiser course. Statements such as the above finally were one of the causes of his removal from the Indian missions of the Great Northwest.

About this time, Father Nicolas Point, a Jesuit who had come to America from France in 1841, was completing his tour of duty among the Indians of the Northwest.⁵³ He had visited Forts Union, Clark, Pierre, and Vermillion as early as 1847, where he recorded several baptisms.⁵⁴ He was called back to Canada in spite of the fact that he wished to remain among the Indians of this region. Garraghan, in his work on The Jesuits in Middle United States, points out that Father Point had been accused of being slightly deranged mentally, and for this reason was relieved of his duties in the Northwest.⁵⁵ In spite of this, he added his contribution to the growth and development of the Catholic Church in the

⁵²Ibid., p. 59.

⁵³Garraghan, Jesuits, p. 259.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 451.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 454, 455, 456.

present state of North Dakota.

In 1862, aboard the steamer Spread Eagle, and again in 1863, on the Alone, De Smet passed through the present state of North Dakota but made no record of any intercourse with the savages.⁵⁶

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1864 requested Father De Smet to make a journey to the hostile Sioux, and act in collaboration with the Commanding General of Fort Berthold in bringing about a treaty with the tribe. After his experience with the government at Fort Laramie, the missionary decided against it, for, "I fear I would lose all caste among the Indians. . . Should I present myself in their midst as the bearer of the word of the Big Chief of the Big Knives in Washington, no longer their great Father but now their greatest enemy, it would place me in a rather awkward situation."⁵⁷ He, however, at his superior's request, departed from St. Louis on April 21, 1864, making his way without stop to Fort Berthold.⁵⁸ There he spent the remainder of the summer administering to the Indians. While there, he received word that the chiefs of the Santee Sioux, who had participated in the Minnesota Massacre of 1862, wished to speak to him about the possibility of making peace with the government. At the same time, General Sully was

⁵⁶De Smet, Life, Letters, and Travels, pp. 778-79-80.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 85.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 86.

rushing up from the southeast with a large command of troops. De Smet deemed it advisable to consult him first to learn the terms he should present to the Indians. Unfortunately, Sully was not in a conciliatory mood, for he told De Smet it would be best to punish them first and speak of peace later. "In consequence," De Smet wrote, "of the General's declaration and the circumstances of the case, my errand of peace, though sanctioned by the government, became bootless, and could only serve to place me in a false position. . . ."59

This apparently fruitless journey took on a luster of success when he was able to baptize two hundred and four children in the vicinity of Fort Berthold.⁶⁰

Throughout his years of travel up and down the Missouri River, Father De Smet suffered from recurring physical illnesses which often caused him considerable suffering. In 1867, Bright's Disease, accompanied by severe hemorrhages, caused his weight to drop forty-eight pounds, and hindered him in his work.⁶¹ In spite of this, he set out for the plains in the spring of that year. He went with the purpose of observing the Indian reaction to the turn of events in the region due to the influx of white population. He travelled from Indian encampment to Indian encampment, taking down his impression of their state of mind over the

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 87.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 828-29-30.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 107.

new population due to the gold in Montana. He felt:

. . . That if the just claims of the Indians are attended to; if their annuities are paid them at the proper time and place; if they are supplied with the necessary tools for carpentry and agriculture--the tribes of the Upper Missouri will remain at peace with the whites. . . .⁶²

But if they were disobeyed and ignored, the Indians would cause an immense amount of trouble on the prairies. He wanted the Government to make an honest attempt to abide by the provisions of the treaties it had entered into with the Indians. Unfortunately, the "just claims" ~~of~~ the Indians were ignored, and bloodshed became a common occurrence. The savages continued their raids on white settlements and travelers.

While gathering data on conditions, De Smet was also making a survey of Sioux country in an attempt to decide on a good location for a mission. He observed sites where the greatest number of Indians came together. He decided upon Grand River, where it meets the Missouri in the extreme north central part of present day South Dakota. In 1868, he returned to this location to make the preliminary arrangement for the mission. Unfortunately, due to ill health, he was forced to return to St. Louis before he could make any progress in his plan. Although he made one more trip to the Sioux encampments, he made no progress, because ill health and difficulties with his superiors in St. Louis made success impossible. All his hopes were destroyed in 1871,

⁶²Ibid., p. 91.

when Fathers Kuppen and De Meester returned to St. Louis with a message from the Indian agent, Major Connor, stating, ". . . that nothing in the way of cultural and religious improvement could be effected among the grownup members of the tribe. . . ." ⁶³ They presented Major Connor's report to their superior who found it, in view of the pessimistic attitude of the Agent, inadvisable at this time to establish a mission there. The work was finally accomplished by a group of German Benedictines, apparently using data amassed by De Smet.

De Smet made his last journey up the Missouri into the country of the Sioux or Dakota Indians in 1870. As had been the case for a number of years, his health and age inhibited any active work among these Indians, and this trip was really a farewell journey. He stopped at Forts Vermillion, Pierre, Berthold, and Union, visiting the many tribes he had administered to for thirty years.

From the day he made his last trip up the Missouri in 1870, and to the present day, De Smet has been the topic of a great deal of discussion. The praise, as well as the criticism given by biographers, is in a large part true. But as pointed out earlier, De Smet contributed to the growth and development of Catholicism in North Dakota, not by his residence, but rather by his contacts with so many of the Indians of the region. These Indians saw De Smet, spoke

⁶³ Garraghan, Jesuits, Vol, II, p. 486.

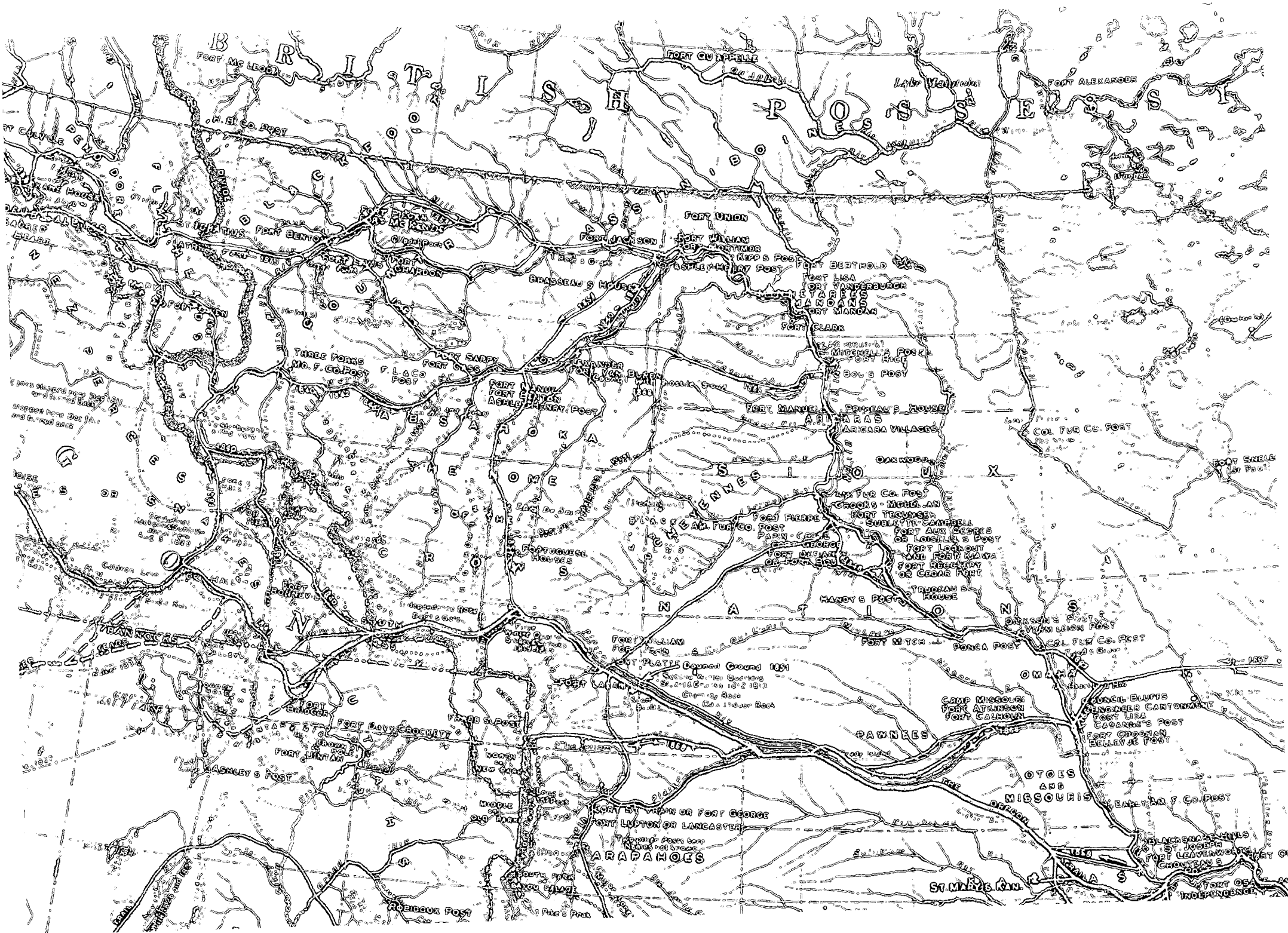
with him, and partook of his services, thereby gaining some knowledge of the Catholic religion. He was an ambassador of good-will and example, as were Hoecken, Point, and Harper in their work. It would be a gross injustice to judge these men solely by the missions they founded or the number of Indians and half-breeds they baptized. They made their contributions to the development of the Church, to the state of North Dakota, and to the nation, in their work among the Indians.

Father De Smet died May 31, 1873, after a prolonged illness caused by Bright's Disease. He spent fifty years in this United States, thirty-three of them as the Missionary of the Missouri.⁶⁴

While Harper, De Smet, Point, and Hoecken were working among the Indians of the Missouri River region, Father Antoine Belcourt was rebuilding Pembina mission in the Red River Valley.

The map on page 70 has the travels of Father De Smet in bold white lines with the date along side. The map was obtained from Montana State University's map collection.

⁶⁴De Smet, Life, Letters, and Travels, p. 107.



CHAPTER IV

BELCOURT: FATHER OF THE CHURCH IN NORTH DAKOTA

Father George Antoine Belcourt played a significant role in the history of the Catholic Church in North Dakota. He has been called a "defender of the oppressed," explorer, teacher, "Emperor of the Prairies," and plainly, a good priest.¹ To the above mentioned titles, one might add "Father of the Catholic Church in the State of North Dakota." The titles given to this missionary seem to indicate he spent a lifetime, while in reality he worked but ten years among the people of the territory. Notwithstanding this short term of duty, Father Belcourt re-established Pembina mission and created a new one at St. Joseph (Wahalla), west of Pembina. He gave the Church a re-birth which was to endure and develop into the present Catholic Church of North Dakota. Often the study of a man will give the clearest perspective of the events which occurred around him, and such is the case with Father Belcourt.

Belcourt was born on the Baie of Fabre in the Province

¹Kathrine Hughes, Father Lacombe the Black Robe Voyageur (New York: Hoffat, Yard, and Company, 1911), p. 21.

of Quebec, April 22, 1803.² Little is known of his early life other than the fact that it was centered around the French-Canadian customs of Lower Canada. He attended a small school in Baie where he began to entertain thoughts of the priesthood. After due consideration, he enrolled at Nicolet College, and in March, 1827, he received the collar and authority of the priesthood.³ His first appointment, after ordination, was as assistant at Three Rivers. He spent two years there, after which he was transferred to the parish of St. Francis of the Lake as pastor. He served the people of this parish less than one year, and in 1830 he moved on to St. Martin's.⁴ These first three years of parish work are indicative of the restless disposition that was to characterize Father Belcourt throughout his life.

At the time of Belcourt's appointment to St. Martin's, the Bishop of St. Boniface, Father Provencher, returned to Quebec in quest of funds to erect a cathedral in his diocese and to search out some young priests willing to return to the prairies with him. Bishop Provencher, with the able assistance of Bishop Panet of Quebec, persuaded Father

²George A. Belcourt, "Dept. of the Hudson's Bay Company," (Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society, Vol. I, St. Paul: Historical Society, 1902), p. 179.

³Vernice Aldrich, "Father George Antoine Belcourt, Red River Missionary," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 1 (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota, 1927), p. 30.

⁴A. J. Lafreniere, "Address at the dedication of the memorial to Father Belcourt on Butte St. Paul, Turtle Mountains, June 28, 1934." (MS in the Chancellory Office Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota), p. 1

Belcourt to return to the Indian missions of Manitoba. He acquiesced only after learning of the dire need for priests in that diocese.⁵

Young Belcourt, with the zeal and idealism of a newly ordained priest, had many of the physical qualities needed to withstand the elements of the prairies. According to Mr. William Davis, an old pioneer North Dakotan, "Belcourt was a tall man, six feet in height, broad-shouldered, muscular, and very active. His complexion was fair, his hair abundant. . . ."⁶ The long journey from Lower Canada to his new field of duty impressed the need for excellent physical, as well as spiritual condition, upon Belcourt.

The two men departed for the West early in 1831, and arrived at their destination June 19, after traveling 2,118 miles.⁷ Belcourt found Provencher's account of the need for priests to be alarmingly true, for there was an abundance of work laid out for him at the mission. Like the missionaries who preceded him, he applied himself to the learning of the Indian languages. Apparently he adapted himself readily to this academic undertaking, for in later years, he edited several works in the language of the savages. Among his works, the most important were a book of hymns, a dictionary, and a grammar. He gained such a masterful grasp of the

⁵Aldrich, "Belcourt," p. 30.

⁶Lafreniere, "Address," p. 4.

⁷Ibid., p. 1.

Indian language that he became the official instructor for young priests coming into the diocese.

In the summer of 1832, Belcourt attempted to establish a mission at Prairie a Fournier, south of St. Boniface. His plans, however, were frustrated when a band of Gros Ventre Indians made an attack upon the young settlement. Although the assault was repelled by the settlers, Belcourt's superior in St. Boniface felt the need of establishing a mission closer to the city. In spite of this early setback at the hands of hostile Indians, the young priest showed no signs of discouragement.

For the next sixteen years, Belcourt labored among the aborigines of the large area extending from Hudson Bay to the United States border, along the present day states of Minnesota and North Dakota. Because distances were great, no one settlement of Indians gained his services permanently until he established a mission at Baye St. Paul, located north of Pembina, in 1834.⁸ In spite of the fact that he took up permanent residence at the new mission, he continued to serve the savages of this region by means of an extended yearly journey. Unfortunately, few records are available concerning the charitable acts he performed for the Indians while at the mission and on these trips.

In 1845, the Hudson's Bay Company and the priest came into conflict.⁹ Belcourt gives the following account of the

⁸Aldrich, Belcourt, " p. 31.

⁹Ibid., p. 48.

situation, "During the winter months the people were indignant over the conduct of the Company, which arrested the people, threw them in prison, then took possession of the articles which they suspected were intended for trade with the Indians."¹⁰ The Company's dictatorial policies were a result of the difficulties it was having in making substantial profits from the waning fur trade. The Company attempted to control the sale of merchandise with the settlers of the region. It built stores at the post where Indians and whites could trade their products or pay cash for commodities. As the country developed, the Company gained a monopoly of supplying the region's population. The people resented this, especially when the Company drove prospective competitors from the region. The colonists decided to rectify the situation in the manner they knew best--force. Father Belcourt, aware of the need for correction, but against the use of violence, pointed out ". . . as Christians we ought to put up with our civil superiors, even the unjust ones."¹¹ He

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 48-49.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 49. The unfair treatment the Hudson's Bay Company caused Bond to exclaim: "I will adduce a few instances of their impositions: On one occasion they seized the effects of a hunter, upon suspicion that he might exchange some of them with the Indians for furs. On another occasion they caused a hunter to be imprisoned for having given one of his overcoats to a naked Indian, for about its value in rat skins. They also refused to allow the missionaries to receive furs to sustain the expenses of public worship; while the Indians cannot obtain any money from the company for their furs; and forbid the missionaries to buy leather or skins to protect their feet from the cold. These, and a thousand other grievances call so loudly for redress that I think a small increase of the burden will cause the evil to correct itself." Bond, Minnesota, p. 339.

suggested they address a written petition to the Government in London asking for help in fighting the depredations of the formidable Company. The petition reached the crown, whereupon it was presented to the Hudson's Bay Company officials. Notwithstanding the statement's validity, it caused considerable concern and led to immediate action from the Board of Directors. These men turned the full influence of their power against the man who formulated the petition, in order to drive him from the Red River Valley.¹² It should be pointed out here that, at this time, the Company held an immense amount of power in the offices of the Crown. The extent of their power is best exemplified by the influence it exerted in the negotiations between the United States and Great Britain over the Oregon Question of 1846. In two of the four main articles of this treaty, the Hudson's Bay Company gained concessions.¹³ This power, so evident in the Oregon Question, was channeled into the present controversy with the same favorable results. The representative, or governor, for the Bay Company in Canada, Sir George Simpson, immediately arranged for a conference with Belcourt's superior, the Archbishop of Quebec. As a result of this conference, the two men agreed that Belcourt should return to Lower Canada. At this time, Belcourt was in the East for a visit, and the Archbishop chose this occasion to inform him of the

¹²Lafreniere, "Address," p. 2.

¹³Documents of American History, ed. Henry S. Commager (New York: F. S. Crafts and Company, 1944), pp. 311-312.

Company's decision. He told the young priest he should remain in Lower Canada for the peace and welfare of the Catholic Church in the Red River Valley. He also pointed out that the Company officials threatened to sever all relations with the Church in that region if he were allowed to remain. Belcourt was not willing to let this ambitious firm drive him from the people he loved, and started a correspondence with Mr. Simpson which ended in a begrudging invitation to return to the Valley. The invitation came only after Belcourt threatened suing the firm if it did not clarify its stand concerning his removal.¹⁴ While still in the process of fighting the Company, he changed his mind about returning to the Red River Valley of Canada, and instead chose to petition the Bishop of Dubuque, Iowa, as to the possibility of gaining a position in that diocese, near, or in the Red River Valley. The Bishop of Dubuque sent him word that his services would be greatly appreciated in this diocese where so few priests labored. Belcourt gained a formal release from his superior in Quebec; thus culminating seventeen years of service to the Indians and half-breeds of Canada.¹⁵ Such was the manner in which Father George Antoine Belcourt came to serve the inhabitants of the Red River Valley of the United States. This long battle carried on between himself and the Hudson's Bay was not to end with his crossing the border, for as will

¹⁴Lafreniere, "Address," p. 3.

¹⁵Aldrich, "Belcourt," p. 50.

be pointed out later, he personally carried a list of Indians' grievances against the firm to the United States Government in Washington.

In July, 1848, Belcourt became the successor to Provener and Dumoulin at Pembina. When he arrived at Selkirk's old settlement, immediate preparations for the ensuing winter were necessary. His experience to the north of the border made him aware of the need for utmost precaution against the prairies' harsh winters. During this winter, he struggled with the problems of reorganization, as well as instructing the Indians in the Catholic religion, agriculture, crafts, and acting as their physician and mediator in all disputes. The first step in rebuilding the mission was the formulation of a set of plans for a chapel and rectory. He worked throughout the winter on plans for these buildings to be constructed the following summer. As spring passed into summer, Father Belcourt, with aid of his parishioners, constructed a chapel. He related, ". . . in 1849, I constructed a chapel on the Red River, a mile below the mouth of the Pembina River, on the most advantageous site we could select."¹⁶ Thus, again a mission was opened in what is now the state of North Dakota. Unlike its predecessor, it was destined to endure to the present day. Within a few years, Belcourt's mission at Pembina became an important link

¹⁶Belcourt, "Dept. of Hudson's Bay," p. 180. Belcourt said, "That the total population of the colony of Selkirk is about 7,000 souls, of which a little more than one-half are Catholics. . . ." Ibid., p. 180.

between St. Paul, Minnesota, and Winnipeg, Manitoba, over the famous Red River Ox Cart Trail.¹⁷ The added population which gathered about the new mission necessitated an assistant.

In 1849, Father Albert Lacombe, a newly ordained priest from Montreal, arrived. As he wrote, ". . . I devoted myself to the study of the Sautouse language during the whole winter under the able direction of my companion, Father Belcourt."¹⁸ It was in this barren outpost on the Red River that Father Lacombe was to serve the first years of apprenticeship as a priest. As Hughes, in his biography, stated, "his wanderjahre between youth and the serious battlefield of life."¹⁹

By the end of 1850, Fathers Belcourt and Lacombe had baptized one hundred-sixteen persons, the forerunners of many more conversions in the years to come.²⁰ It is impossible to ascertain how many people; half-breeds, Indians,

¹⁷L. R. Hafen and C. C. Rister, Western America, The Exploration, Settlement, and Development of the Region Beyond the Mississippi (New York: Prentice Hall Incorporated, 1951), p. 362.

¹⁸John Shanley, "Letter to Mr. Frank Wilson, Bathgate, North Dakota, February 11, 1902." (MS in the Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota), p. 2.

¹⁹Hughes, Lacombe, p. 22.

²⁰"Number of baptisms at St. Joseph and Pembina, 1849-1859." (MS in the Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota.)

1848--18

1849--32

1850--66

1851--42

1852--57

1853--64

1854--67

1855--66

1856--76

1857--86

1858--57

1859--36

and whites, enjoyed the benefits of their ability as teachers.

Like his predecessors, Belcourt was interested in carrying the savages out of barbarism into civilization. He thought that after religious instructions, the best means to assist the Indians in the transition was agriculture. The course of events during his first years at Pembina intensified this desire to instruct them in agriculture and crafts, for the changing scene on the western prairies made Father Belcourt see the necessity for new occupations. Greatest of these problems, and around which so many of the other problems revolved, was the influx of the white man, owing to the discovery of gold, first in California, and later in Oregon and Washington. The settlement of the Oregon Question in 1846, between the United States and Great Britain, brought people to the country west of the mountains, and the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act in 1854 started a move of American settlers into North Dakota. All the above mentioned events opened the doors of the prairies just a little wider to the white immigrants. True, these events, with the exception of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, did not directly influence the region later to be North Dakota; however the warning was clear that the white man would soon invade the prairies to the north. But more important was the immediate effect it had upon all the Indians of Red River. The buffalo were rapidly disappearing because of plagrant misuse by "sportsmen" Americans. Tribe after tribe was forced to leave the Missouri River to find their life sustenancy, the buffalo.

The Indians from the Missouri were trespassing on the hunting grounds of their neighbors far to the north. The result was Indian fighting Indian as well as white man for existence. The American nation was to receive the brunt of these events in the Indian wars of the 1860's, 70's, and 80's. Belcourt, who was somewhat of an idealist throughout his life, failed to realize the difficulty in changing the Indians from their nomadic life to one of agriculture. In 1850, he made a statement which gives a clear view of idealism that colored his judgment.

Tho the half-breeds lose much of their time in idleness, I don't think this owes its origin to the vice of indolence, but rather to the absence of all commercial interests, that is to say, to the want of enterprises passably lucrative or of rewards sufficiently inviting to make them sustain the fatigues of labor.²¹

Belcourt's idealism revolved around the solution to the problem, rather than his actual appraisal of the problem itself. His warnings to the people of the United States were realistic, in spite of the fact that he was criticized for them.

These warnings went unnoticed, because many Americans thought they were painting an unusually bleak picture of the situation. As Father De Smet was criticized by his superiors, so too was Father Belcourt. Provencher said of him: "In a stable position he has a passion for going ahead of the times. In his imagination he sees always that which will not come to pass in ten years, so that he is always

²¹Belcourt, "Dept. of Hudson's Bay," p. 181.

ahead in spirit and behind in reality.²²

Belcourt found the Indians were not his only problem. In the spring of 1850, great floods along the Red River forced the missionaries to move to higher ground. They chose a site some distance to the west of Pembina. This was described simply, as follows:

At the foot of the beautiful Pembina Mountains of Pembina, it is more than 200 feet above the level of the river Pembina, which divides it, and on its first table rises the little village of St. Joseph. It is divided by quares of 12 chains, and subdivided by lots of six chains. Its streets are one chain (66 feet) wide, which adds to the beauty of the town, rendering the extinction of fire easier, and favoring the free circulation of air and health of the citizens.²³

When the water receded, Belcourt appointed Lacombe pastor of Pembina, while he remained at St. Joseph. He envisioned there a metropolis on the prairies, possibly even having the seat of a bishopric. These expectations were shattered however, when a bishop was named to St. Paul, Minnesota. Father Belcourt's desire for great coal mines in the area was reported by the Minneapolis Journal. He hoped to have a lucrative trade item for the surrounding region and the new community.²⁴ This plan was also shattered when the coal industry did not develop. This was characteristic

²²Aldrich, "Belcourt," p. 25.

²³Belcourt, "Dept. of Hudson's Bay," p. 192.

²⁴Minneapolis Journal, January 1, 1937. This newspaper article was found in the Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota, with the page number not cited.

of the missionary who was constantly concerned over the financial situation of the missions.

The problem of financing anything but common necessities was always difficult. The Bishop of Dubuque was unable to grant any financial aid because even the seat of his Bishopric, like St. Joseph and Pembina, was in the larva stage of development. Considerable building was necessary in the more heavily populated areas of the diocese, particularly in the growing urban areas of Minnesota and Iowa. Belcourt was able to gain a small amount of help from the Bishop of St. Boniface and the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in the East.²⁵ Both, however, were negligible in comparison to the needs of these small communities. Some help came from the United States Government, which gave St. Joseph a grist mill and enabled the settlers to grind their own flour.²⁶ This mill gave some encouragement to the extension of wheat farming in the area. To augment the uncertain income, the settlers of Pembina and St. Joseph voted to place a tax on each married man of the parish. In accordance with the vote, a memorandum was drawn up in 1852, which read:

Considering that all labourers are worthy of their hire and that it is not just that the clergy should always serve us for charity, it is resolved that each man shall give for the support of the clergy ten Shillings Sterling per year.²⁷

²⁵Norton, Catholic Missionary Activities, p. 109.

²⁶Lafreniere, "Address," p. 3.

²⁷Wesley Bond, Minnesota and its Resources (New York: Redfield and Company, 1853), p. 277.

It was a yearly habit of Father Belcourt to go out into the Indian encampments to instruct the natives in the Catholic religion. In the winter of 1849-50, when he departed from Pembina on one of these trips, he entrusted the care of the mission to Father Lacombe.²⁸ During this particular journey he crossed over one-half of the present state of North Dakota, stopping in the Turtle Mountains, located in the north central portion of the region. Here he found several small bands of Chippewa Indians, whom he instructed in the Catholic faith. On journeys such as this one, time being an important consideration, he often baptized all the children wishing the sacrament, and promised the older inhabitants that he or another priest would return to give them instructions. While in the Turtle Mountains, he erected a high cross on a butte, which he called Butte St. Paul.²⁹ This was to be the rallying point for his future visits to the Indians of the surrounding region. Although we have no record in the letters of Father Belcourt that he visited the Arikara, Mandans, and Minataries along the Missouri River, Father De Smet gives us ample reason to believe that he did. While visiting there he wrote in 1852, ". . . Some days after we stopped at Fort Berthold, to land some goods at the great village of the Minataries. . . ." Then De Smet goes on to say:

²⁸Lafreniere, "Address," p. 3.

²⁹Norton, Catholic Missionary Activities, pp. 106-107.

. . . all the children of this tribe had been baptized by Rev. Mr. Belcourt, a zealous and untiring missionary of the Vicarate Apostolic of the Red River, which is under the jurisdiction of Msgr. Provencher, Mr. Belcourt has visited these tribes several times, and met with great success in disposing them in favor of our religion.³⁰

Belcourt returned to Pembina early in 1850, to find Father Lacombe instructing a group of Indians. He was enthusiastic about his work, as he told Belcourt:

. . . his small flock was devout and attentive to their religious exercises during the long quiet winter. He did not lack food of a rough order, nor did he have any hardships to endure, but the lack of congenial company and comparative inactivity weighed on him. . . .³¹

Father Lacombe's complaints of an inactive winter were to be forgotten with the advent of summer which meant the gathering up of personal belongings and moving out into the prairies in search of the buffalo. Father Belcourt usually accompanied the Indians on their yearly trek into the interior of the prairies, but this summer found him occupied with other duties. In his place, Lacombe was appointed to attend the spiritual side of the summer's hunt.³² The annual expedition was one of the most colorful aspects of the missionaries' work on the prairies. It amounted to a sort of festival season for the Indians after their long and trying winter. Along with the festivities there was work to be done, for the winter's supply of meat had to be obtained.

³⁰De Smet, Western Missions, p. 77.

³¹Hughes, Lacombe, p. 23.

³²Ibid., p. 24.

The men were anxious to move out into the prairies and renew their old rivalry as to who was the best marksman. To the women, unfortunately, it meant work, for it was their task to prepare the meat for the next winter, as well as to make the yearly supply of clothing and other commodities derived from the buffalo. For the children, it meant an opportunity to learn the ways of the older men. Hughes describes the eve of the great trek in this manner: ". . . Father Lacombe called the band together. In the open air they recited with him the evening prayers, and startled the forest echoes with their lusty rendering of the hymns Father Belcourt had translated into the Indians' language."³³ For a moment imagine the following morning. The Indians and their good friend, Father Lacombe, up at the crack of dawn making the final preparation; the prairie sky an unending blue, occasionally broken by a listless cloud; below the sky, the dry prairies stretching beyond even the Indians' imagination; now upon the prairies a disorganized band of people moving slowly toward the horizon, some dressed in bright calico, others in the more common leathern outfits; regardless of dress, all were keyed for the occasion. The influence of the missionary, both in spiritual and material ways, was great. In a spiritual manner he was able to instruct the young children at almost any time, and the busy women when they were not occupied with work. The missionary's influence in a material

³³Ibid., p. 25.

way was equally as great. His presence indirectly kept the Indians in larger bands, so as to accommodate him in his instructions. This means of holding the braves together insured them a larger kill, through cooperation. Lacombe records his impression of the hunting in this manner: ". . . how happy I was with those hundreds of families. . . who are so devoted to the priest. I believed myself to be a new Moses, leading his people in the desert."³⁴ In the autumn, they returned from their wanderings over the prairies with a large supply of pemmican for the ensuing winter. Hughes, in his life of Lacombe, states, ". . . he was unmistakably a returned chaplain of the hunt; his face was burnt to copper by the ardent sun; his soutane was soiled and frayed, even ragged in places."³⁵

Lacombe had attended his last hunt for in 1852, he returned to Montreal to enter a religious order.³⁶ At his leave-taking, Pembina became a submission of the larger community of St. Joseph. Pembina had lost many of its settlers because the floods of previous years drove many of the people to St. Joseph; therefore the need of a resident priest diminished. The few remaining settlers at Pembina were to feel the loss of Lacombe, as did the Indians in the small encampments about the village. At the time Lacombe departed, Belcourt was attempting to negotiate a treaty in

³⁴Shanley, "Letter to Mr. Frank Wilson," p. 2.

³⁵Hughes, Lacombe, p. 34.

³⁶Bond, Minnesota, p. 322.

behalf of the Indians, with the territorial government in St. Paul. His plans were frustrated when the governor, Ramsey, informed him the power to make such a treaty was not within his jurisdiction.

Unsuccessful in this, Father Belcourt personally carried the cause of the Indians and half-breeds to Washington, D.C., where he arrived in 1854.³⁷ When arriving there, he presented the Indian Commissioner, Mr. Manypenny, with the list of "grievs and demands" the Indians had formulated. In six brief statements he outlined his reasons for his presence in Washington. He asked that a treaty be made to guarantee the half-breeds and Indians the lands on both sides of the Red River, asking that this treaty be drawn up and signed as soon as possible to insure the Indians' rights to this property. In the next three articles, he protested against depredations by the Hudson's Bay Company and the other British subjects. He claimed, ". . . who come two or three times each year over the line, being four or five weeks at each time, hunting about on the Indians' hunting ground."³⁸ Belcourt continued, "Now, for my part, I will complain in the name of philanthropy, of this mean and inhuman traffic in intoxicating liquors of the Hudson's Bay Company. . . For the sake of humanity, my dear sir, do use

³⁷Linda Slaughter, "Leaves From North West History," (Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Vol. I, Bismarck: Tribune Press, 1906), p. 213.

³⁸Ibid., p. 214.

your credit to shut that door of misery and hell."³⁹ He told the Indian Commissioner that the Indians expected their rights to be recognized and protected by virtue of their position as citizens of the United States. In the fourth article of his message, he warned the government of the possibility of an Indian uprising among the Missouri River tribes, and suggested that a force of troops be sent to the region as to cut the plot in the bud. Finally, he asked for a continuation of the aid received from the government of the year before, which had amounted to five hundred dollars. Belcourt stated his case for aid in this manner, ". . . if it were not presumptuous on my part I would ask you if I could not humbly be some further assistance for building a house for instruction, the old being too small."⁴⁰

Belcourt's pleas to the government had a number of interesting facets which should be examined briefly. The first of the six "grievs and demands" is most significant. Belcourt, in the name of the Indians, asked for a strip of land along the Red River Valley which the Indians could call their own. This meant only one thing--the Indians were looking for security against the present threat of foreigners and the unquestioned future threat of the Americans moving west. The very fact they asked, "that this treaty be made as soon as possible--the sooner the better," indicated

³⁹Ibid., p. 216.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 216.

their plight.⁴¹ The second clearly indicated that the Indians were concerned over the supply of food. The appeal to expel the Canadians and the Hudson's Bay Company from their hunting grounds hinges upon a loud cry for existence, for the Indians depended almost entirely upon the fresh supply of meat the buffalo provided. Article three dealt with the age-old problem of liquor. The first missionaries in the present state of North Dakota warned of the need for laws to curb the sale of liquor to the Indians.⁴² Belcourt merely reiterated this appeal. Under the influence of liquor, the Indians were very susceptible to the nineteenth century badmen. The fourth's significance lies in the fact that the Indians asked to be protected as American citizens against the insults of the strong, especially those of a foreign power.⁴³ The fifth of the grievances and demands apparently provided a warning to the American Government of what could, and would happen if the Indians' rights were not recognized. The rumbling of war drums along the Missouri meant dissatisfaction--not necessarily legitimate but nevertheless real. In the last article, he said in effect, give me aid to help these

⁴¹Ibid., p. 214.

⁴²In 1819, Dumoulin said, ". . . the great and almost the sole obstacle that we have found to stand in the way of teaching and even of civilizing the Indians is liquor; it is the unfortunate custom, established in this region, to intoxicate the natives whenever one wants to get something out of them." (Nute, Documents, pp. 174-175.) Chardon, while passing through the region, commented: ". . . the Mandans had a drunken frolic last night. . . ." (Francis A. Chardon, Journal At Fort Clark, 1834-1839, ed. Annie H. Abel, Pierre: Dept. of History, State of South Dakota, 1932, p. 149.)

⁴³Slaughter, "Leaves," p. 214.

unfortunate Children of God, and I may be able to at least cushion the impact of their dissatisfaction. The combination of the six "grievs and demands" was a climax to the use of words by the Indians of the prairies. The prairie Indians were quite aware of their precarious position, and wished to take means to counter-act it. They are proud today, after decades of humiliations, to think of the nationalism that existed in the 1850's. When words failed their cause, they would resort to the means they knew best: war, which eventually did occur.

After returning from the east in 1855, Belcourt devoted the last four years of residence at St. Joseph and Pembina to the education of the Indians. In order to staff the three schools he had opened, he established an order of nuns to teach the children. He called this order the Sisters for the Propagation of the Faith. Although the order functioned only two years, it was able to instruct over one hundred children. The Catholic Directory of 1856 gives the following account of this order:

Sisters of the Propagation of the Faith. Those Sisters, seven in number, conduct an English, French, and Italian school, and by their knowledge of the language used by the different tribes, they are particularly qualified for the instruction of persons of their own sex and of children. They have one hundred pupils in their school, they receive boarders at the rate of \$30.00 for six months. These Sisters intend, as soon as circumstances permit, to extend their labors to the sick.⁴⁴

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 214.

Belcourt felt he could develop an extensive educational scheme if he were provided with the financial backing or some other form of industry in the region.

When the United States Government erected a military post near Pembina, Belcourt gained one of the businesses he desired. With the building of the fort, capital came into the mission, which in turn could in part be used to finance his educational scheme. His return to Lower Canada doomed his dreams for an extensive educational plant in St. Joseph and Pembina.

After eleven years of service to the Indians, half-breeds, and whites, Belcourt returned to Canada, gaining his formal release from the Bishop of St. Paul in 1859.⁴⁵ Father Joseph Goiffon, who had been appointed to Pembina and St. Joseph in 1858, assumed the duties Belcourt was forced to abandon.⁴⁶

Upon returning to his home in Lower Canada he took up the obligations of pastor of the Acadian Parish of Rustico. He remained there until 1869, when he was transferred to the parish of Magdalen Islands. This was his last official office in the Catholic Church, and he retired to Shediac, New Brunswick in 1872.⁴⁷ In a letter confirming the date and place of his death, his nephew, Onesime Belcourt,

⁴⁵Shanley, "Letter to Mr. Frank Wilson," p. 4.

⁴⁶Shanley, "Founding of Catholic Church," p. 27.

⁴⁷Shanley, "Letter to Mr. Frank Wilson," April 1, 1902, p. 1.

wrote: "The mortal remains of my uncle, the late Abbe George Anthony Belcourt, who died at Shedic on May 31st, 1874, and was buried at Memromcook. . . ."⁴⁸ Mr. A. G. Burr, a prominent North Dakota citizen, addressing a group upon the occasion of the erection of a memorial to Belcourt, on Butte St. Paul in 1939, paid a truly great tribute to the man. He said:

. . . he came with the Bible in one hand and the Cross in the other. His purpose was to bring light to souls of Ignorance, substitute Christianity for Superstition, Civilization for Barbarism. As Byron says: 'Tis the cause makes all; degrades or hallows courage in its fall.'⁴⁹

John Shanley, the first Bishop of North Dakota, gave a simple but true eulogy to Belcourt when he said: "Of all the Catholic priests who labored in these regions in the early days none did so much good as Belcourt. . . ."⁵⁰

⁴⁸Onesime Belcourt, "Letter to Bishop John Shanley, Bay of Fabre, Sept. 18, 1937 (MS Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota).

⁴⁹A. G. Burr, "Address at Dedication of a Memorial on Butte St. Paul," (North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. VII, No. 4, Bismarck: State Historical Society, 1933), p. 286.

⁵⁰John Shanley, Address Delivered at Annual Meeting of State Historical Society of North Dakota, (Fargo: Han-naher and Schannach, 1908), p. 10.

CHAPTER V

"GREAT OPENING"

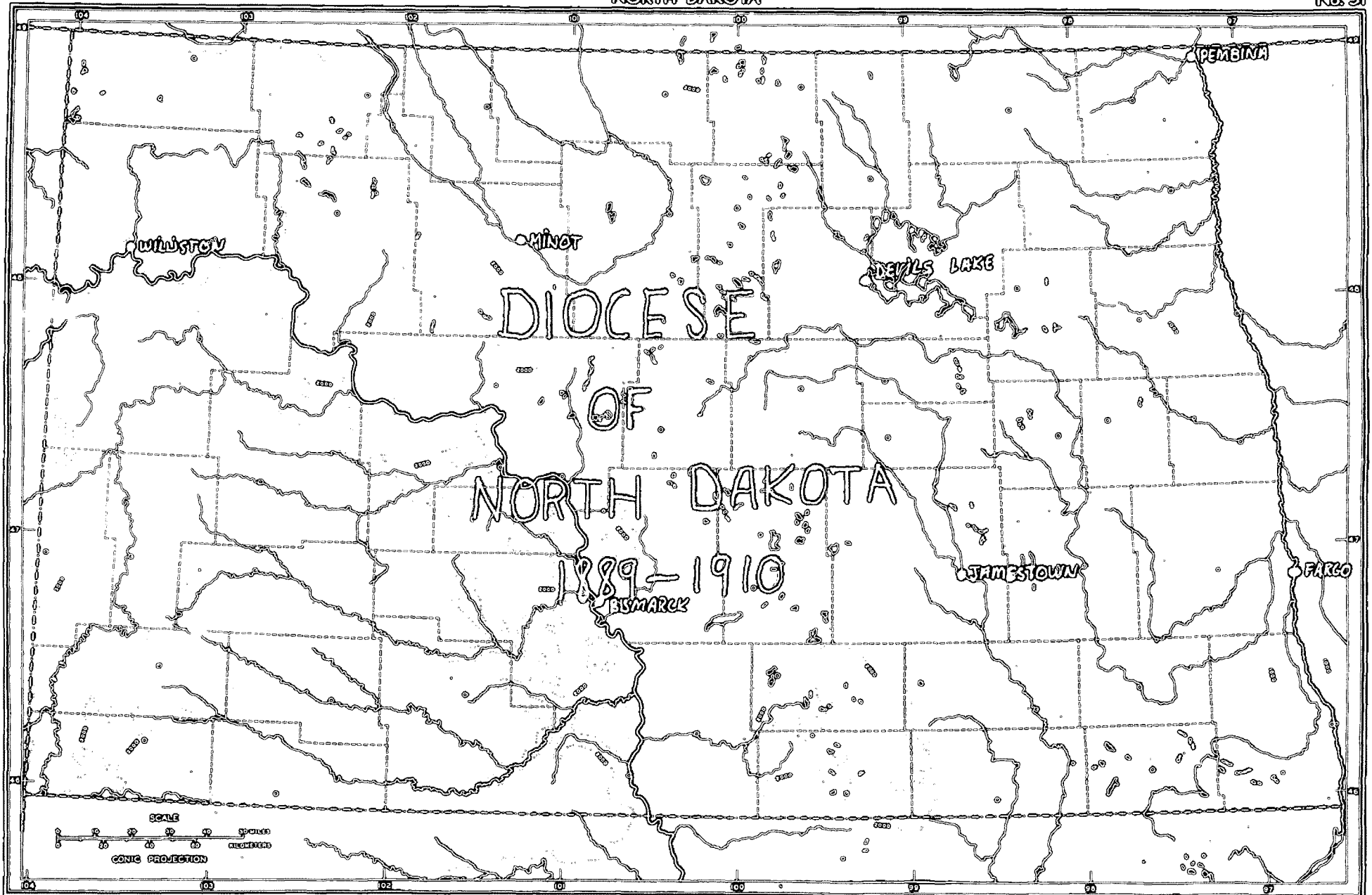
The missionaries who were to follow Belcourt into what is now North Dakota after 1859, were faced with new problems along with the existing ones that had perplexed them for so many years. Problems of financing the new missions created and maintaining the old ones continued to harry them. Many of the priests continued to have trouble with the Indian language and their peculiar customs. Although some advancement had been made in bringing the savages to peaceful lives, they still caused sporadic destruction and bloodshed throughout the region. Until the time that the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Bismarck in 1873, the vastness of the territory remained a barrier to effective work. Added to these problems was the influx of immigrants into the prairies. It was during this time that the Catholic Church was transformed from one of small, rural missions to larger, centralized, urban parishes. This new development was influenced and promoted by the growth of the territory into statehood.

Like the region comprising what is now North Dakota, administration of the Church had undergone transformations. From 1793 until 1826, the western two-thirds of the region

was under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Louisiana, and the eastern part was governed from 1818 to 1823 by the Bishop of Quebec. After 1826, the whole region of what is now North Dakota was governed from the Chancellory Office in St. Louis. In 1837, all the land east of the Missouri River was assigned to the Bishop of Dubuque, while the western portion remained under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of St. Louis. When a Bishop was named to St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1850, the area east of the Missouri passed to his care. All the land west of the Missouri River was still regarded as Indian Territory, and was transferred to a Vicar in 1850. Due to the Congressional Bill establishing Nebraska Territory in 1854, this region west of the Missouri and in the Territory of Nebraska was transferred to the Vicar Apostolate of Nebraska in 1857. In 1879, the entire region of Dakota Territory was put under the jurisdiction of the Vicar Apostolate of Dakota. This form of Church government remained until the territory was split into two states. When the statehood bill passed Congress in 1889, a bishopric was established for North Dakota.¹

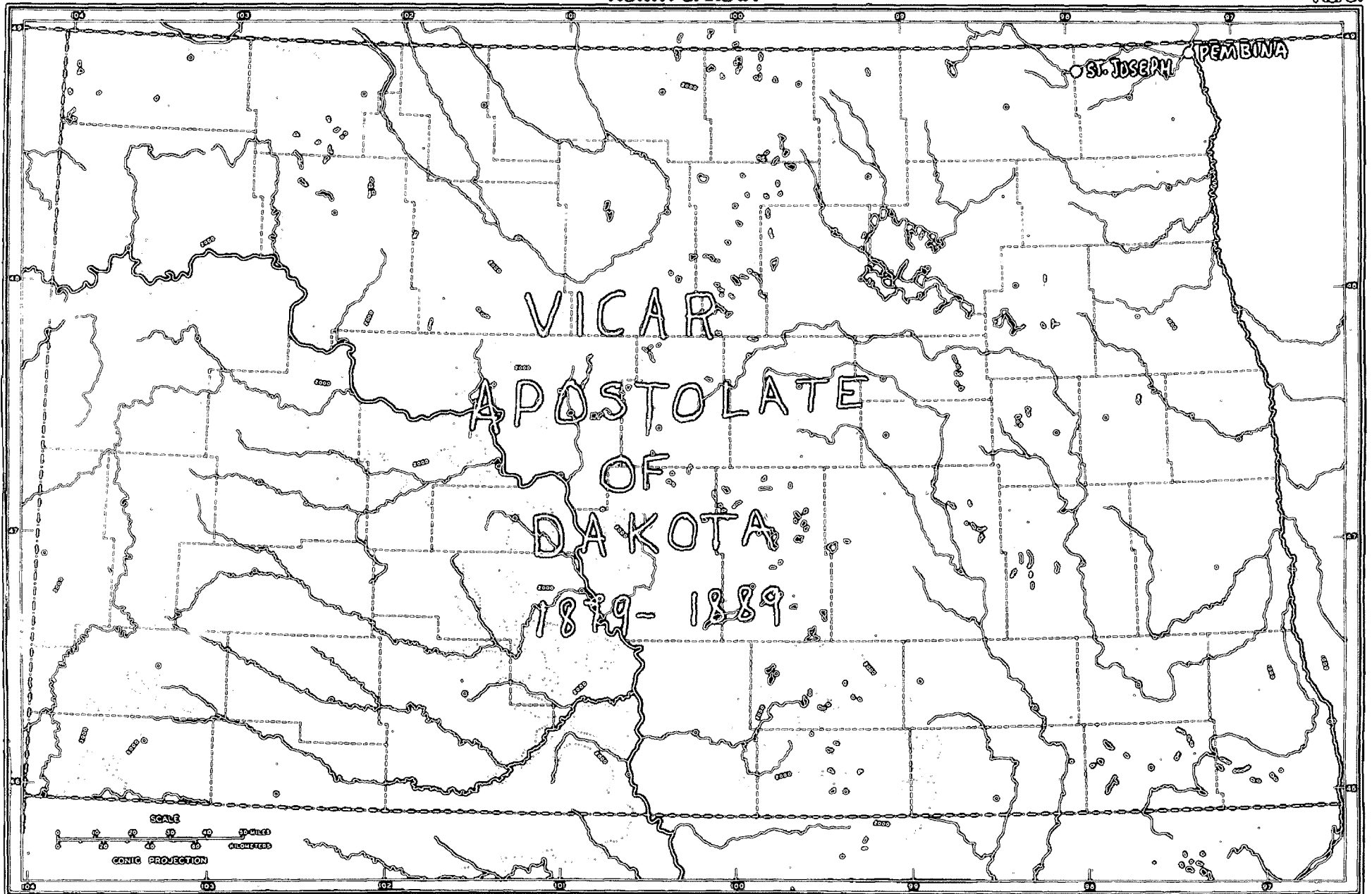
In 1861, the area now comprising North and South Dakota was given territorial status; thus providing the

¹This information, and the following material for the maps was given to me by Father Benedict Pfaller, O.S.B., Assumption Abbey, Richardton, North Dakota. Other accounts can be had in Nute, Documents, pp. 276-77, and Sister Duratschok, "The Beginning of Catholicism in South Dakota," (Doctor's Dissertation, Catholic University of America, pp. 128-129.



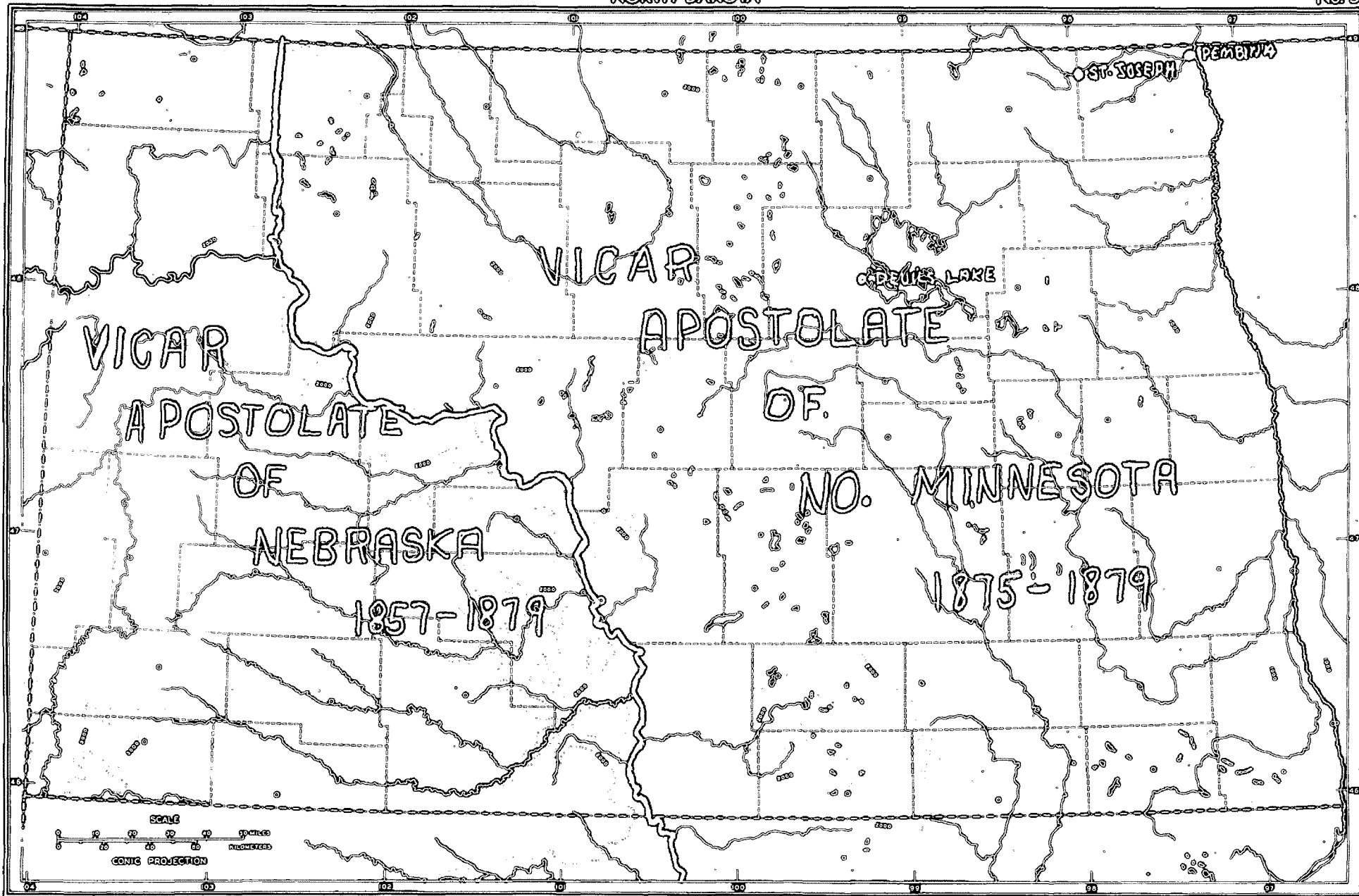
NORTH DAKOTA

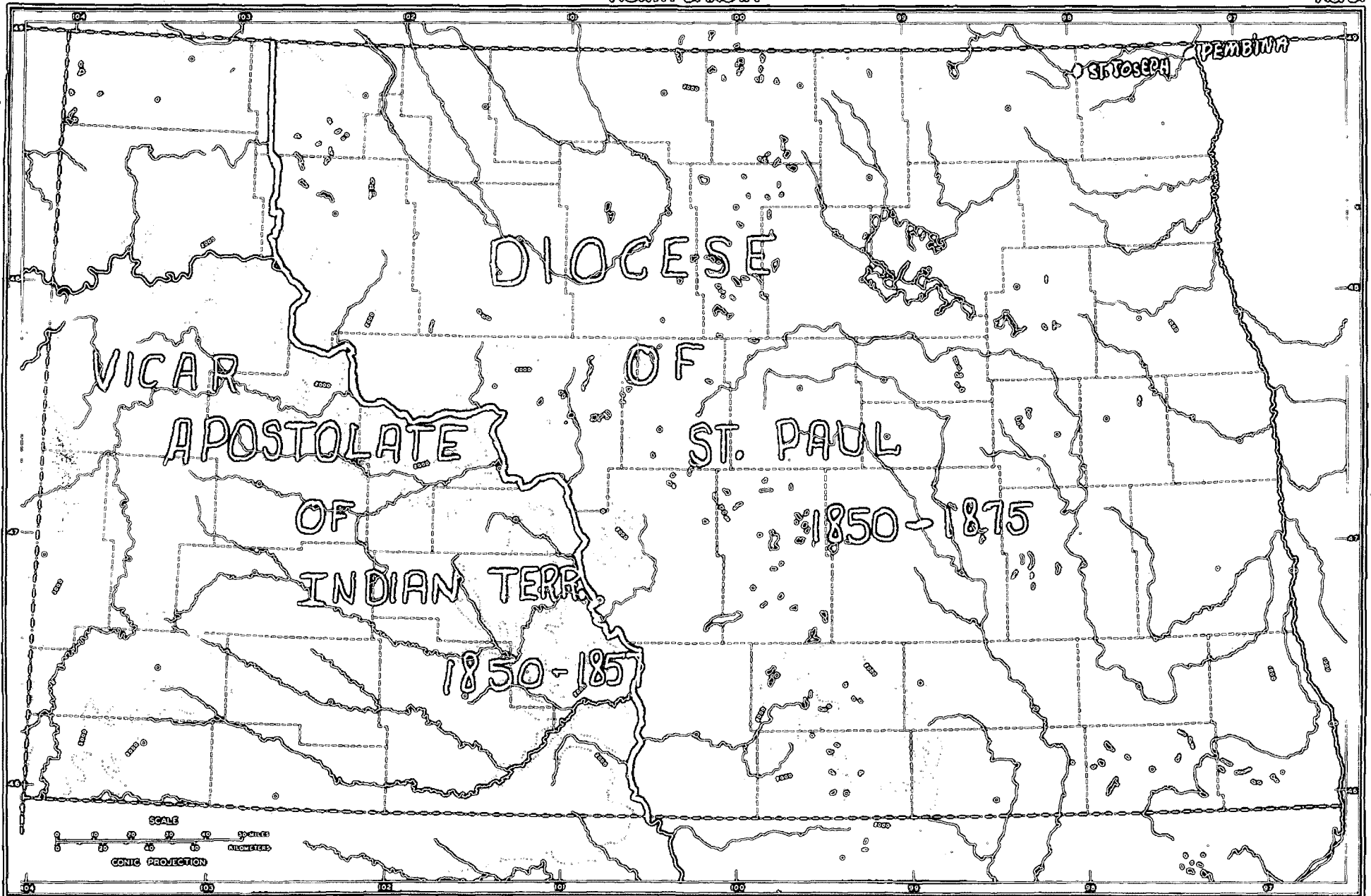
No. 51

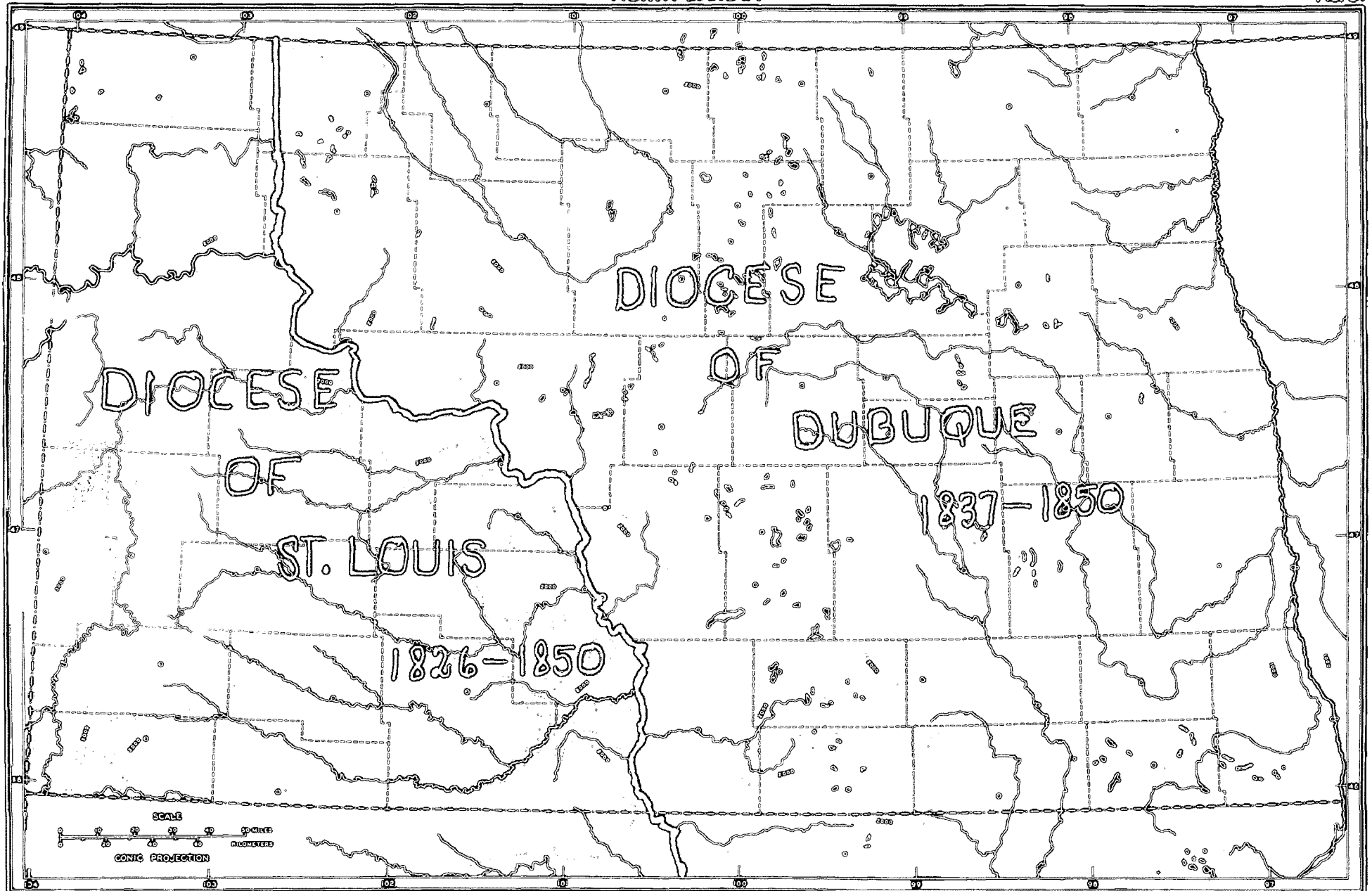


NORTH DAKOTA

No. 51







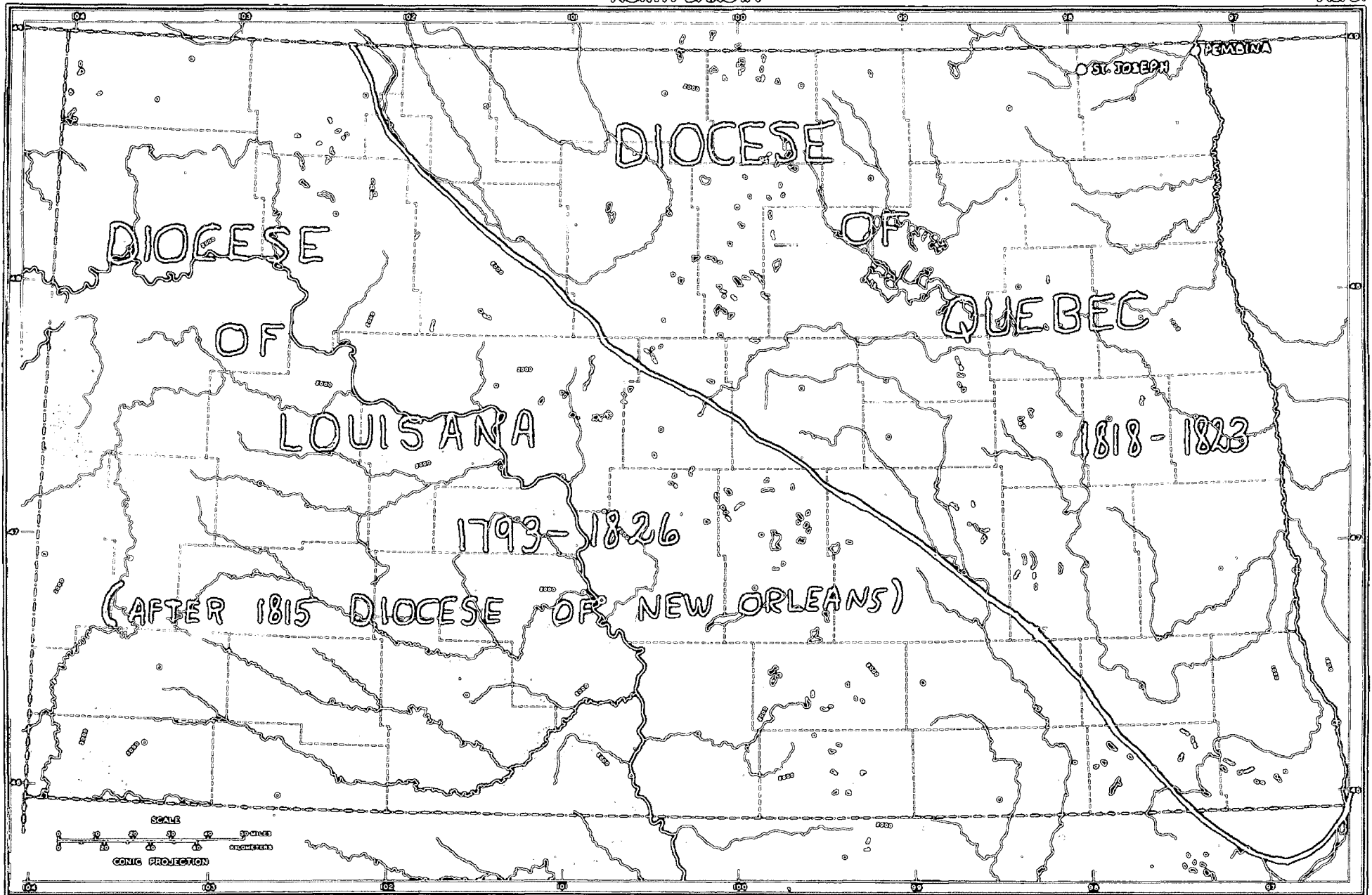
NORTH DAKOTA

No. 51

MINNESOTA

DIOCESSE
OF
ST. LOUIS 1826-1837

SCALE
0 10 20 30 40 50 MILES
0 10 20 30 40 50 KILOMETERS
CONIC PROJECTION



residents with their first genuine voice in the administration of the Government. The established Church government did not change during this period, but continued to be under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of St. Paul and the Vicar of Indian Territory. In 1861, probably one-third of the inhabitants living north of the forty-sixth parallel were adherents to the Catholic faith. In the years following, the growth of the territory however, the non-Catholic population outstripped that of the Catholic. Along with the profound changes occurring in the Church, the Territory witnessed a number of changes which influenced the development of the Church. After the area became a Territory, the new influx of population changed the complexion of life on the prairies. The construction of the railroads allowed, for the first time, adequate connections with the marketing centers of the East. The Northern Pacific Railroad which reached the Territory in 1873, provided the white population with the markets which had been, before this time, too far distant to encourage stock or grain farms of an appreciable size. In the days before better strains of beef cattle appeared upon the ranges, profits were difficult from stock not accustomed to the winter's severe cold and the hot summer sun of the prairies. Better varieties of wheat made it possible to make substantial profits in this semi-arid region, where eastern types previously had had a difficult time growing. Other inventions, such as that of the barbed wire, new milling devices for grain, and the advent of the binder

hastened this change in both the Territory and the Church. Because events such as the above mentioned occurred, the white man was able to make a better living on a farm. He still had to contend with the recurring drought of the summer and the severe winter cold. This region, thought of as the "Great American Desert," became the new hope for many landless people of the United States.

When these people came in large numbers, the Church was forced to expand. Many new priests had to be obtained in order to administer to the new population. Churches of sufficient size had to be constructed, and finally, a form of Church government closer to the people was formulated and put into action. Because the growth of the Church and the Territory went side by side, it would be impossible to assign categorically to each its part in this transformation.

The clergy who came into the area were varied in character. Many continued to come from Canada without special appointment, while the Bishop from the diocese having jurisdiction over the Dakota Territory sent out men from time to time. In the 1870's, the Benedictines came to the Territory for the first time from monasteries in the east. They were not of the De Smet type, but more inclined towards the establishment of permanent missions. In spite of fixed habitation, they were just as much missionaries as were their wandering predecessors.

The first of these new missionaries was Father Goiffon, who had succeeded Father Belcourt after he retired

to Canada. He had been sent to the Red River missions by the Bishop of St. Paul.² He found it necessary to expand the educational plant of his predecessor because of the increase of commerce over the Red River Ox Cart Trail and the passing of the first steamboat down the Red River in 1858.³ He attempted to persuade a teaching order of nuns to come to the mission, but failed. He did, however, lay the ground work for the eventual coming of an order of nuns by bringing the situation before the eyes of his superior. Although most of his efforts were taken in the education of the Indian and Metis children, he found time to travel to the outlying encampments to educate those unable to attend school in Pembina or St. Joseph.

Tragedy struck Goiffon on one such trip into the encampments in 1860. He had been travelling with a group of men, but decided to strike out alone in order to reach Pembina in time to celebrate Sunday Mass. He was caught in a blizzard, half-way between his friends and the mission, which caused him to lose his sense of direction. Unable to find the mission, he remained five days on the prairies without sufficient food or clothing to withstand the elements. He was able to keep alive only by wrapping himself in a buffalo robe and eating wild berries and buds remaining from the preceding autumn. When he was finally found by a

²Shanley, "Founding of Catholic Church," p. 26.

³Clement Lounsberry, Early History of North Dakota (Washington, D.C.: Liberty Press, 1919), pp. 154-155.

half-breed scout, Pierre Richy Bottineay, his body was badly frozen. Bottineay rushed him to a hospital in St. Boniface where the doctors decided it was necessary to amputate one of his legs. The nuns at St. Boniface, not expecting Goiffon to live, proceeded to pour the wax for his funeral candles. One of the nuns in charge of making the candles, spilt the wax, which started a fire and destroyed the Bishop's home and the Cathedral. Fortunately, the sick priest lived through the operation and the fire to return to Pembina in 1861. Some years later he recounted his near fatal experience,

. . . the evening before I had eaten rose buds to eke out my provisions. Then I felt the need of fire; but where to procure wood? I wanted to be in Pembina the next day, Sunday, how much further had I to travel? The weather was so bad that I couldn't read my breviary on horseback. . . My watch had stopped several days before. Everything combined to puzzle me. . . .⁴

He remained a short time in Pembina, and then returned to Little Canada, a parish in the suburbs of St. Paul. During his three years at Pembina and St. Joseph, he married twenty-two couples and baptized one hundred ninety-two men, women, and children.⁵

Goiffon was succeeded at Pembina in 1861, by Father P. Andre, the first of the Oblate Fathers to serve as resident pastor for the two missions. He was one of the many

⁴Joseph Goiffon, "A Thrilling Experience," (Catholic Bulletin, May 1909, No. 3, Fargo: Diocese of Fargo, 1909).

⁵Shanley, "Founding of Catholic Church," p. 29.

Oblates to act in this capacity in the next sixteen years.⁶ Andre encountered a number of difficulties at this pastorate on the Red River. He apparently was not familiar with the Indian tongue spoken at the two missions, and this disturbed the parishioners, who were mostly of Indian or mixed breed. Soon they petitioned the Bishop of Quebec, asking for the return of Father Belcourt. They said, showing a lingering respect for Belcourt, ". . . We the undersigned pray your Lordship, if possible in any way, to grant us Rev. George Antoine Belcourt, who has heretofore exercised in the ecclesiastical functions." They continued protesting that this present priest did not know the language of the settlers, and as a result, many were denied the privilege of receiving the sacraments.⁷

Another problem as perplexing to Father Andre, was the repercussions of the Minnesota Massacre of 1862. The United States Government held that many of the Indians in his parish were, in part, responsible for the bloodshed at New Ulm. It made efforts to capture and punish the accused, which caused the whole region to be unsettled. In an attempt to bring about a peaceful settlement of the problem, Andre accepted the Government's invitation to bring the Indians to

⁶Ibid., p. 28.

⁷Inhabitants of Pembina to his Excellency, Rt. Rev. Bishop of Quebec, February 19, 1862. (MS in the Chancery Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota.)

stand trial.⁸ During the winter of 1863-64, he travelled from encampment to encampment, holding parleys with the Chiefs in an attempt to save them ". . . from destruction by reconciling them with their offended government."⁹ His work, and the hardships he suffered during the winter bore good results the next spring, for he was able to bring the two parties together. In 1864, the Sioux Chiefs, after weeks of negotiations, declared they were willing to sign and comply with the treaty drawn up by the Army Officials. In accordance with the treaty, they agreed and pledged to keep their people from committing depredations against the whites and their property. They said from the date when the treaty became effective, they would not occupy the territory south of the Cheyenne River, near the Bald Hills, extending east and west from the Red River of the North to the James River. It was to be opened to white immigration, which resulted from the passage of the Homestead Bill. The chiefs also agreed to drive all persons who had participated in the Massacre of 1862 from them. Finally, the Government agreed to give them protection as long as they complied with the articles of the treaty, and stayed on the reservations set aside for them.¹⁰

⁸Headquarters District of Minnesota, Department of Northwest History, St. Paul, Minnesota, October 9, 1863, Special Orders No. 333, to Father Andre. (MS in the Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota.)

⁹Shanley, "Founding of Catholic Church," pp. 28-29.

¹⁰Sioux Declaration, 1864, as recorded by Father Andre, July 1864. (MS Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota.)

Andre met with more success than did De Smet, who negotiated at the same time with the Indians at Fort Berthold who were accused of having part in the massacre. De Smet had considered his mission bootless because Sully would not cooperate. Andre's success was far from a final solution, because the treaty applied to only a small portion of the Sioux nation. Many bands of Sioux, who were not represented, did not consider the treaty applicable to them. They continued to harry white immigrants moving into the region, either to the south or north of the Cheyenne. Some advantages to the Indians, as well as the Government, were obtained, but Andre was not to see them realized, for he departed from Pembina in 1864.¹¹

To the south of Pembina and St. Joseph, another priest, also an Oblate, was working towards a solution of the old rivalry between the Sioux and Chippewa. Father Jean Baptiste Genin, who came to Dakota Territory from Canada in 1868, was stationed at Fort Abercrombie.¹² He was concerned over the bloodshed and destruction caused by this rivalry. After considerable work, he was able to bring the two tribes together at his mission, in hopes of settling their problems. During the brief negotiations, he acted as the moderating

¹¹Alexander Toche, Vingt Annes De Missions Dans le Nord-Quest De L'Amerique (Montreal: 1866), p. 203.

¹²Fort Abercrombie is located in the southeastern part of North Dakota. It served as an important link between St. Paul and St. Boniface, Canada, over the Red River Ox Cart Trail.

influence, and when tension reached a breaking point he interceded to bring the tribes back to the negotiations.¹³ The peace pact was signed, causing Judge Shannon of the United States District Court at Pembina to state, ". . . the people of North Dakota and Northwest Minnesota owe, whatever denomination or no denomination, a debt to the Catholic Church they can never repay. . . ." Shannon claimed through its priests, the Church had helped solve another one of the many problems concerning the Indians.¹⁴ Although Genin's work among the Sioux and Chippewa peace parley was well done, the remainder of his career was controversial and less productive.

During Genin's years as a missionary, the hard work and loneliness apparently caused him to suffer from a melancholy, depressive state of mind. He was expelled from the Oblates in 1866, but with the exception of a few years, continued to practice his clerical privileges until his death in 1900.¹⁵ For several years after 1866, he wrote a series of articles for the New York Freeman's Journal. In these articles he described conditions in Dakota Territory and the region to the east he had visited. He pointed out several times the difficult situation the Indians had been thrust

¹³John Shanley, "Letter to G. J. Keeny, Fargo, June 1, 1906," (MS in Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota), pp. 1-2.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁵Shanley, Address to Society, p. 10.

into because of the influx of white population.¹⁶ He received some criticism of the conclusions he drew for the Freeman's Journal. He got into another difficulty in 1891, while serving as a witness in Judge O. P. Stearn's court, St. Louis County, Minnesota. Stearns expressed a feeling that Genin was guilty of perjury. In 1901, W. C. Nash of East Grand Forks, in recounting an earlier incident, also claimed that Genin was "a perjurer and a scoundrel."¹⁷ From 1888, until his death in 1900, Genin served as pastor of Michigan City and later Bathgate, both in North Dakota. Shanley apparently overlooked these accusations against Genin, for he did not remove him from his clerical duties. In 1908, eight years after Genin had died, Shanley found it necessary to re-appraise his life. His reappraisal was the result of an article written by Linda Slaughter in the 1906 edition of the North Dakota Historical Collections, praising Father Genin and criticizing the Church. Slaughter portrayed a man who at times had refused to recognize his superior's commands, and as a result, in 1908, Shanley gave an address to the Historical Society. Shanley was "compelled in interest of truth to tell about him what I much prefer should remain unknown."¹⁸ At that time, he used the statements of Stearns

¹⁶Slaughter, "Leaves," (Several of Genin's reports to the Journal are spread throughout her article), pp. 238-292.

¹⁷Shanley, Address to Society, p. 9.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 8.

and Nash to verify his stand, although earlier he had apparently disregarded them. He claimed Slaughter's article was full of "flagrant misstatements" of fact,¹⁹ and that Genin's writings in the Journal were "ravings".²⁰ In concluding his speech, he reiterated the text of his address:

The truth is that the only explanation of Father Genin's idiosyncrasies, to use a very mild expression, must be sought, as I said in my address at his funeral, in his diseased brain. The poor man was crazy from and before the time the Oblates expelled him in 1866 to the day of his death. . . .²¹

This speech indicated that Shanley suffered from a change of mind in 1908. He here stated that Genin was "crazy" from 1866 to the time of his death. Yet, in spite of this, he did not remove him from his priestly duties. It is inconceivable that any superior would allow a "crazy" man to continue to hold his office. Slaughter, on the other hand, in her attempt to give Genin a high position in the history of the Church overplayed his role. The facts of Genin's life remain unsettled. No final decision can be reached about him until the full records of his activities are available.

When the Indians of the Fort Totten Reservation near Devils Lake, Dakota Territory, asked for ". . . the man with a cross and not the man with a sword. . .", their plea was

¹⁹Ibid., p. 1.

²⁰Ibid., p. 10.

²¹Ibid., p. 10.

answered. Abbot Martin Marty took up residence there in 1876.²² Marty was born in 1834, and came to this country shortly after he was ordained a Benedictine monk in 1855.²³ He took up residence at St. Meinrad's Abbey, St. Meinrads, Indiana, becoming abbot in 1860.²⁴ While serving as Abbot of St. Meinrads, he received a letter from the Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions, requesting him to send two missionaries to Dakota Territory. As surprising, no doubt, as it was to his fellow monks, he volunteered his services to the Dakota missions. In doing so, he forsook the cloistered life, choosing rather to follow the wandering life of a missionary to the Indians. He presented his resignation to the community, and departed for Dakota Territory in 1876.²⁵ In August, just one month after arriving at Fort Totten, he made the following report of his arrival and obstacles in the path of his success there:

A good many Indian Chiefs, some of whom are baptized, came to see me and express their joy at seeing at last the successor of Father De Smet, who will stay with them. The disposition of these Indians could not be more favorable than I have found them. But there are three points which give

²²Northern Lights, (St. Michael, North Dakota), Vol. XIII, No. 7, April, 1946.

²³"Bishop Marty, O.S.B., Apostle of the Sioux," Indian Sentinel (Washington, D.C.) Vol. II, No. 1, p. 9. Marty was born in the town of Schwyz, Switzerland. He came to this country after talking to Bishop Henni of Milwaukee.

²⁴Ibid., p. 8.

²⁵Albert Kleber, O.S.B., "Dakota Documents," The Spirit, Vol. X, No. 1, May 1952, pp. 9-10.

me great uneasiness, and might eventually defeat my best efforts. The first point is the disagreement between the agent and the military commander, for which there is no remedy. The second is the threatening dispersion of several bands of Indians, now living peacefully near the agency. Col. Poland has orders to arrest, dismount, and disarm the Indians returning from the hostile camps. One chief and many young men belonging to Standing Rock and having been out, are now returning, or expected by their friends to do so. An execution of the arrest by force is sure to cause a great stampede, both peaceables and hostiles, and might even lead to open conflict and bloodshed, while the agent assures me that he could execute the same order with the help of the chiefs without any trouble. The third and last obstacle to the success of my mission is the barrenness of this country, frustrating year after year all attempts at Agriculture. . . .²⁶

Unfortunately, Marty could do little about the abominable land the Government had given the Indians to till. The problems that seemed so large and insurmountable to him in 1876 were largely rectified in the eighties. When the military were recalled from the Agencies, the difficulties between the Agent and the military officials was solved. With better forms of agriculture being introduced into the reservations, the barrenness of the land was partly counteracted.

For three years, Marty worked among the Indians of Dakota Territory, attempting to teach them the principles of Christianity and a better way of living, until in 1879, when he was appointed Bishop of Tiberias. His diocese comprised all of the 147,000 square miles of Dakota Territory. Over this region were scattered 13,000 Catholics, most of whom

²⁶"Bishop Marty, O.S.B., Apostle of the Sioux," p. 27.

were Indians, and there were fewer than twenty priests to administer to them.²⁷ The Pope chose Marty for this important post in preference to the Oblate or secular clergy recommended to him. The secular clergy had served the region for more than sixty years, and the Oblates had worked about Pembina for sixteen. This is paradoxical, for when a Bishop was named to the Red River Region in 1820, the Jesuits, who were the main missionary body at this time, were passed over in preference to a secular. Now, in turn, the secular were denied the privilege of having a Bishop chosen from their ranks.

The Benedictines had come into this region partly at the urgings of the agents at Fort Totten. Under President Grant's plan of assigning each agency to a specific religious group, missionaries were brought into the agency. Since Fort Totten was one of the seven agencies in the United States assigned to the Catholic Church, the agents invited the Benedictines to represent their Church.²⁸ Between 1871 and 1876, Major Forbes was agent at Fort Totten. During his time of residence there, he attempted to induce a resident missionary to the agency. Although not successful in obtaining a resident priest, he did secure a group of teaching nuns from Montreal. Between the time of their arrival in 1874, and Forbes' death in 1881, these nuns had opened a school in which all the children of school age were in

²⁷Kleber, "Dakota Documents," p. 10.

²⁸Ibid., p. 7.

attendance.²⁹

Forbes was succeeded in 1881 by Major James McLoughlin, who continued Forbes' educational policies as well as making a new attempt to gain a resident priest.³⁰ Through the assistance of the Catholic Bureau of Indian Missions, he secured the services of Abbot Martin Marty.³¹ The Indians now had a resident priest and a group of nuns, but they lacked the needed financial assistance for the development of their church and school.

Some pecuniary assistance came from the Diocese of Vincennes, Indiana, but it was not enough to carry out an elaborate system.³² In a letter thanking the people of that Bishopric, Bishop Marty described the helpless conditions in which the Indians were forced to live. He said that the Sioux nations, which numbered "between thirty and forty thousand souls," are helpless paupers.³³ Because of the large numbers living in a comparatively small area, the Indians can no longer live by the chase, but must turn to other occupations in order to exist. Farming was not a part of their nature, and as a result they became idle wards of the state. The land which the government had given them was not of the most fertile nature. It demanded much more labor

²⁹Ibid., p. 18.

³⁰Ibid., p. 20.

³¹Ibid., p. 21.

³²Ibid., p. 13.

³³Ibid., p. 14.

than the Indians were willing to exert in order to make it productive. To add to this condition of laziness, the government had guaranteed the red man certain gifts of food and clothing in earlier treaties. The Indians, aware that "Uncle Sam" would provide them with the necessities of life, were not prone to exert themselves in labor. Marty described this nineteenth century "soup line" to the people of Vincennes in this manner:

. . . they come every week to the Agency to receive their rations of beef, bacon, flour, beans, tea, coffee, sugar, and tobacco, and every fall a supply of clothing. Once in a while wagons, harness, plows, oxen, cows, pigs, and even poultry are given out, but as the number is in no proportion to those in need, a great deal of anxiety, dissatisfaction and envy is occasioned, and many times are wasted, because those who receive them do not know how to use them.³⁴

The resulting laziness on the part of the Indians had an adverse effect upon the missionaries' educational plans. For if the Indians were provided the essentials of life by the government without undergoing the exertion of labor, why should they attempt to learn agriculture from the missionaries? Marty said this condition existed not only at Fort Totten, but at the other seven agencies in Dakota Territory. In this same letter, he implied the government was further hindering the Indians, as well as the missionaries, by reducing the number of reservations in Dakota Territory from eight to four. The new reservations were to be located

³⁴Ibid., p. 15.

north of the Cheyenne River and south of the White River.³⁵ The region not included was to be opened to the steadily increasing influx of cattle and grain farmers. By reducing the number of reservations, the Indians had even less land than they had previously held. Marty, throughout his letter, made it plain to the people of this Indiana diocese that the frontier was changing. As he rode from mission to mission, he could see the tremendous changes taking place.

In 1880, Dakota Territory had 135,177 inhabitants.³⁶ If contrasted with the 3,554 in 1860, one can see the immense growth which took place in but ten years.³⁷ Dakota Territory was quickly changing from the hunting grounds of the red man, to fenced-in farms of the white man. Events of the preceding years had hastened this unfortunate, and in part unjust, change. The passage of the Homestead Act in 1862 gave land seekers a new and free hand in choosing lands in the northwest. The Black Hills, so long a refuge of the Indians, was overrun with hungry gold prospectors in 1876. In 1875, the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Bismarck, which gave rise to the extension of the cattle business in the western part of the Territory. At this time, 1880, Hill was putting construction crews to work on his Great Northern Railroad, which reached Minot, in north central Dakota

³⁵Ibid., p. 14.

³⁶Tenth United States Census Report, p. 52.

³⁷Eighth United States Census Report, p. 552.

Territory, in 1886.³⁸ Jim Hill planned and built his railroad around the idea of never an empty boxcar. He was, as were the officials of the Northern Pacific, interested in bringing prospective farmers to the region. Towns came as a consequence of the railroad building. The Indians, as a result, were pushed further and further back into oblivion, only to "end-up" on such unproductive wastelands as the Turtle Mountains and other reservations like it.

A change within the Catholic Church of Dakota Territory was the result of these events. The Indians, as they were pushed back into the depths of the reservations, became smaller in number, while the white population increased. This increase in white population meant larger churches, more schools, and above all an increase in the number of clergy. It was at this time, when the white population exceeded the Indian population, that the Catholic Church made a transition from a frontier organization to a semi-urban one. The relative numbers of whites and Indians are not significant, but rather the social and political implications of population. White men were now present in sufficient numbers to make their way of life and customs dominant, because of a more integrated social order. When these customs became the prime mover of the society, the frontier Catholic Church disappeared. Marty was apparently surprised at the growth of the Church which had taken place due to these

³⁸Lounsberry, North Dakota, p. 342.

events. He departed from the Indian missions of northern Dakota Territory to take up his new assignment as Bishop of South Dakota.

He named Father Vincent Wherle, whom he had met in Jasper, Indiana, and had induced to come to the region in 1887, to succeed him in the work at Fort Totten and its mission stations.³⁹ Wherle, too, was a Benedictine from St. Meinrad's Abbey in Indiana. Marty, in sending Wherle to Devils Lake, told him there was "A Great Opening" among the Indians of the region.⁴⁰ Wherle, taking Marty's statement literally, found it to be true, for he had to cover the region between Devils Lake and the Montana border, the route of the Great Northern Railroad, along with his duties at Fort Totten.

For a year and a half, Wherle administered to the people of this vast region alone. He said:

My many missions made me a travelling agent for the Lord, celebrating Mass regularly in 24 different stations. Of course, on Sundays, I said Mass for the larger congregations in Devils Lake, Cando, Minot, and Fort Buford, but of course only one Mass in each place a month.⁴¹

Upon arriving at one of his stations, Minot, Wherle whimsically describes the welcome he received:

³⁹Benedict Pfaller, O.S.B., "The Most Reverend Vincent Wherle, O.S.B., The First Bishop of Bismarck (1855-1941)," The Swiss Record, March, 1950, p. 31. Father Wherle was born in the Canton of St. Gallen, Switzerland, and had come to St. Meinrad's in 1882.

⁴⁰Vincent Wherle, O.S.B., "Missionary Recollections," Extension Magazine, Vol. 32, No. 3, August, 1937, p. 34.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 19.

They gave me a hearty ? welcome (sic). After slowly reading the letter of the Bishop, Judge O'Rourke turned to me saying: 'The letter is correct!' Then he gave me a searching look as if I were a criminal standing before his court and added: 'Father Vincent, more able men than you have tried it here and could not make it a success; how much less can you succeed!'⁴²

If the welcoming committee did not discourage the young missionary, the state of affairs within the city probably did.

". . . at that time Minot had some three or four decent Catholics in town; the rest were gamblers, saloon keepers, jailbirds, men gone bankrupt in other places, men run away from their wives, and wives run away from their husbands. .

. . ."⁴³ The city has changed from the time Wherle made his first visit in 1888. About one-fifth of the population is Catholic today, of which many are still living with their wives.

Along with his duties as a travelling agent of the Church, Father Wherle, or as the Benedictines would call him, Father Vincent, also founded and built a number of churches throughout the western part of the state.

He also was interested in other types of work, particularly education. Shortly after coming to Fort Totten Reservation, he established the monastery of St. Gall's.⁴⁴ It functioned but a short time because of the shortage of

⁴²"Historical Sketch of Minot," (MS in Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota), p. 2.

⁴³Ibid., p. 1.

⁴⁴Pfaller, "Wherle," p. 32.

manpower, resources, and an adverse location. After St. Gall's failed, Wherle purchased a strip of land near Richardson, in southwest Dakota, and started construction on Assumption Abbey. He was successful in this attempt, for the monastery has endured down to the present day.⁴⁵ It now has two years of college and a prep school with plans for future expansion. He also laid plans and supervised the construction of a number of churches along the Northern Pacific Railroad. The tremendous amount of work he did throughout the western part of the state proved to be one of the factors influencing the decision to make him Bishop of the Diocese of Bismarck in 1910.⁴⁶ This was an era of Bishop-making in Dakota Territory.

When the Territory was divided into two separate states in 1889, John Shanley was appointed Bishop of North Dakota. Shanley was born in up-state New York in 1852, and educated at St. John's College, Collegeville, Minnesota, and in Rome.⁴⁷ When he returned from the Holy See, he was appointed pastor of the Cathedral parish of St. Paul, Minnesota, where he worked until appointed Bishop of North Dakota.⁴⁸ He took up his duties as Bishop of this region in January,

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 32-33.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁷Gerald Weber, "John Shanley, The First Bishop of Fargo," (Master's Thesis, St. Paul Seminary, 1951), p. 13.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 15.

1890.⁴⁹ Shanley built a number of churches, opened new schools, hospitals, and orphanages between the time he was ordained and his death. In a conversation with Lieutenant Governor Kickey of Dakota, Shanley said:

It will be my business to build up the material and the moral interests of all North Dakota. . . We can, the most of us at least, expect to live to see North Dakota as thickly settled as Pennsylvania. To see the country dotted with churches, not perhaps costly edifices, but numerous and useful, to see the land filled with school houses, not merely having good exteriors, but in which the principles of true citizenship shall be taught.⁵⁰

With the consecration of Shanley as Bishop of North Dakota, the frontier Catholic Church comes to a close.

This period between 1818 and 1889, actually a relatively short time, witnessed the extension of the Catholic Church from a small mission in the extreme northern corner of the region to one of some size and permanence. During this period, it grew from a small mission with but a few parishioners, to one with over thirty churches and 19,000 Catholics.⁵¹

In the period following the close of the frontier Catholic Church until the present, many advancements have been made. The Church has expanded itself to every part of the state. Education has had a tremendous growth, particu-

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 48.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 50.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 50.

larly during the years of prosperity. In fact, by 1910 there were forty-two schools serving the 65,000 Catholics.⁵² The large increase in the number of members is due in large part to European immigration after 1900. Under the direction of the two Bishops holding ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the state, new churches, hospitals, and other institutions have been built. Probably more important is the fact the state is supplying most of its own clergy. The Benedictine monks at Assumption have plans for a four year Liberal Arts College and a Seminary where the young North Dakotans can be trained. The more far-reaching accomplishments are now in the process of development in the Catholic Church in North Dakota.

⁵²Ibid., p. 17.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

A. UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPTS

- "Letter From Headquarters District of Minnesota Department of Northwest, St. Paul, Oct. 9, 1863. Special Orders 333 to Father Andre." Archive Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota. Letter contains Father Andre's special orders appointing him as special agent for the United States Government in dealing with the Sioux Indians who had taken part in the Minnesota Massacre.
- "Letter From Father Andre to J. R. Brown, Special Military Agent, July 1864." Archive Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota. This letter contains the articles of the Treaty of 1884, as recorded by Father Andre.
- "Letter of Pembina Residents to Rt. Rev. Bishop of Quebec, Feb. 19, 1862." Archive Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota. It concerns the request to have Father Belcourt returned to Pembina.
- "Historical Sketch of St. Leo's Church, Minot, North Dakota." Archive Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota. This sketch contains Father Wherle's first impression and contact with some of the residents of Minot.
- "Letter From G. J. Keeny to Rev. John Shanley, June 1, 1906." Archive Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota. Keeny wrote to Shanley of Genin's part in Chippewa-Sioux peace parley of 1868.
- "Autobiography of Father Joseph Goiffon." Archive Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota. Although somewhat colored, it gives a good picture of the missionary's life.
- "Letter From Rev. John Shanley to Frank Wilson, Bathgate, North Dakota, February 11, 1902." Archive Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo, North Dakota. This letter contains some of Shanley's impressions of the early missionaries.

"Statistics on Number of Baptisms at Pembina and St. Joseph."
Archive Chancellory Office, Diocese of Fargo, Fargo,
North Dakota.

The Archives at Fargo contain a wealth of information on Church in North Dakota. Much of the material was irrelevant to this particular study. This does not mean that anyone interested in doing work on the Church's activities will not find an abundance of very good information. Much of the material is in French and German which requires a special linguistic skill.

B. DOCUMENTS

Hart, John. Report of North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission. Rolla, North Dakota: 1850.

Seventh Census of the United States of America.

Eighth Census of the United States of America.

Ninth Census of the United States of America.

Tenth Census of the United States of America.

C. NEWSPAPERS

Minneapolis Journal, January 1, 1937. "n.p."

Northern Lights, (St. Michael, North Dakota) Vol. XIII, No. 7, April, 1946.

D. PUBLISHED SOURCES

Abel, Annie H. (ed.). Chardon's Journal at Fort Clark 1834-1839. Pierre: Department of History State of South Dakota, 1932. It is full of many good descriptions of the life about Fort Clark.

Tabeau's Narrative of Loisel's Expedition to the Upper Missouri. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1939. He gives a graphic account of the Indians; although somewhat prejudiced against them. It is accurate, however, and should be read by anyone interested in conditions on the Upper Missouri.

- Bemis, Samual F. (ed.). American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy. 10 Vols., Vol. V. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928. Various accounts of the roles Secretaries of State played in treaties concerning the United States, and particularly the Northwest.
- Bond, Wesley. Minnesota and its Resources. New York: Redfield and Company, 1853. An excellent comprehensive account of eastern North Dakota is included in this book.
- Catlin, George. North American Indians: Letters and Notes on Their Manners, Customs, and Conditions During Eight Years Travels Amongst the Wildest Tribes of Indians in North America, 1832-1839. Edinburgh: J. Grant, 1903. It contains several hundred illustrations on various phases of the Indians' life.
- Chittenden, H. M. and Richardson, A. T. (eds.). Life, Letters and Travels of Father De Smet Among the North American Indians. 4 Vols. New York: Francis P. Harper, 1905. This is a valuable source book on De Smet, containing all his letters, etc.
- Commager, Henry S. Documents of American History. New York: F. S. Crafts and Company, 1944. The author gives the Oregon Treaty of 1846 among other important documents.
- Coues, Elliott. New Light on the Early History of the Great Northwest. Vol. I. New York: Francis P. Harper and Company, 1897. Contains early journals. Good for description of geographic and climatic conditions of the Northwest.
- De Smet, Pierre J. Western Missions and Missionaries: A Series of Letters. New York: P. J. Kenedy Excelsior Publishing House, 1858. From the pen of De Smet. It covers his trips to Plains very well.
- Drumm, Stella M. (ed.). John Luttig Journal of a Fur-Trading Expedition on the Upper Missouri 1812-1813. St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society, 1920. A good account of fur traders' experiences on the Upper Missouri.
- Hewitt, J. B. (ed.). Journal of Rudolph Kurz, An Account of His Experiences Among Fur Traders and American Indians on the Mississippi and the Upper Missouri Rivers During the Years 1846-1852. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937. An artistic observer who put many of his impressions down. He mentions contact with clergy along with his impressions of Indians and geographic conditions of the region.

Kappler, Charles. (ed.). Indian Affairs, Laws, and Treaties. 2 Vols. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903-1909. An outstanding 2 volume work on Indians of the United States. Covers important treaties with plains Indians.

Kenton, Edna. (ed.). The Indians of North America. ("Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791.") New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927. Taken from a source recognized as authoritative.

Nute, Grace L. (ed.). Documents Relating to Northwest Missions 1818-1827. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1942. An outstanding piece of work which is a real contribution to the history of the Catholic Church in the Northwest.

Oliver, Edmund. (ed.). The Canadian Northwest, Its Early Development and Legislative Records: Minutes of Councils of Red River Colony and the Northern Department of Rupert's Land. Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914-1915. Provides one with sufficient knowledge of the early legislation of the Red River region.

Palladino, Lawrence B. Indians and Whites in the Northwest; A History of Catholicity in Montana 1835-1891. Baltimore: John Murphy and Company, 1894. The book contains a history of the men who preceded him, as well as many of the experiences of his life. It is somewhat biased, but nevertheless of some definite value to the historian interested in the Catholic Church's activities in the Northwest.

Richardson, James. (ed.). Messages and Papers of the Presidents 1817-1834. (Messages and Papers of Presidents Series, Vol. III.) Washington: Bureau of National Literature and Art, 1901. It contains major American events in which the Presidents were a part. It is accurate and very useful.

Tache, Alexander. Vingt Annes De Missions Dans le Nord Ouest De L'Amerique. Montreal: 1866. A recapulation of his life in the flowery clerical style. It is not of particular interest as a result.

Thwaites, Reuben G. (ed.). Maximilian Prince of Wied's Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832-1834. (Early Western Travels 1748-1846. Vols. XXII, XXIII, XXIV.) Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906. One of the more thorough accounts of the Upper Missouri River region. It contains excellent and accurate material on the Indians and their culture. It is also one of

the best sources on the geographic setting of the Upper Missouri River.

. De Smet's Letters and Sketches 1841-1842. (Early Western Travels 1748-1846. Vol. XXVII.) Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906. Another good source book on De Smet's work in the Northwest.

SECONDARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS

Armstrong, Moses K. History and Resources of Dakota, Montana, and Idaho. Yankton (Dakota Territory): G. W. Kingsbury Printers, 1866. It is considered one of the best general accounts of North Dakota in its pioneer days.

. The Early Empire Builders of the Great West. St. Paul: E. W. Porter Company, 1901. Another book by Armstrong which is considered above average on Dakota.

Arnold, Henry. History of Old Pembina 1780-1872. Larimore: (North Dakota), 1917. Written by an amateur writer. Its value lies in the fact that it covers a long period.

Briggs, Howard E. Frontiers of Northwest: A History of the Upper Missouri Valley. New York: Century Company Incorporated, 1940. A very good secondary account of North Dakota from fur trade to modern times.

Bryce, George. The Romantic Settlement of Lord Selkirk's Colonists. Toronto: Musson Book Company Limited, 1909. This is one of the best books published on Selkirk's colony.

. Mackenzie, Simpson and Selkirk. (Makers of Canada Series, Vol. XII) New York: Oxford University Press, 1926. His biography of Selkirk is good.

Emers, John C. Teton Dakota: Ethnology and History. Berkeley: United States Department of Interior Park Service, 1937. An anthropological work with only parts of interest to the historian.

Flandrau, Grace. Red River Trails. "No Pub.", "n.d.". A story of the Red River which mixes fiction and fact.

- Garraghan, Gilbert. The Jesuits of Middle America, Vol. II. New York: America Press, 1938. An outstanding piece of work by one of the United States' foremost Catholic historians.
- Greely, Horace. New Empires in the Northwest, Vol. I. New York: From Library of New York Tribune Extras, August, 1889. Just another source on Northwest. It is neither comprehensive nor accurate.
- Hafen, L. R. and Rister, C. C. Western America: The Exploration, Settlement, and Development of the Region Beyond the Mississippi. New York: Prentice Hall Incorporated, 1951. One of the few good general textbooks on the western half of the United States.
- Hargrave, John. The Red River. Montreal: John Lovell, 1871.
- Howard, Joseph. Montana, High, Wide and Handsome. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952. A very readable book but not entirely based on fact.
- Hughes, Kathrine. Father Lacombe the Black Robe Voyageur. New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1911. A good biography of one of the missionaries who served a few years in North Dakota.
- Laveille, B. E. The Life of Father De Smet, S.J., 1801-1873. New York: P. J. Kenedy and Sons, 1915. The best biography of De Smet that has been written. It is by no means, however, the last word on the life of De Smet.
- Macgregor, Gordon. Warriors Without Weapons. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946. A fair account of the Indians.
- Mackenzie, Cecil W. Donald Mackenzie, "King of the Northwest". Los Angeles: Ivan Deach, Jr., 1937. This book is somewhat prejudiced, but provides the reader with some good information.
- Margaret, Helen. Father De Smet, Pioneer Priest of the Rockies. New York: Farrar and Rinehart Incorporated, 1940. She has mixed fiction and fact to the detriment of De Smet's work in the Northwest. Her work is readable, but of the leisure type.
- Maynard, Theodore. The Story of American Catholicism. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946. A very general account of the Catholic Church in America.

- Norton, (Sister) Mary A. Catholic Missionary Activities in the Northwest 1818-1864. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1930. She is rather sketchy in her account, but what she has is good.
- Nute, Grace L. and Ackermann, George W. (eds.). Guide to Personal Papers in Manuscript Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1935.
- O'Gorman, Thomas. History of Roman Catholic Church in the United States. (American Church History Series, Vol. IX.) New York: Christian Literature Company, 1895. A general account that is prejudiced toward the Catholic viewpoint.
- Pritchett, John P. The Red River Valley 1811-1849. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942. It is based on documents and is well written. He touches only slightly on the Catholic Church in the region.
- Pyle, Joseph G. Life of James J. Hill. Garden City (New York): Doubleday, Page and Company, 1917. A fair biography of Hill.
- Robinson, H. E. Father De Smet, A Missouri Missionary. Maryville, Kansas: Sign of Republican, 1905. A speech full of errors.
- Ross, Alexander. The Red River Settlement, Its Rise, Progress, and Present State. London: Smith, Elder, and Company, 1856. A good book on the Red River Valley.
- Shanley, (John) Address Delivered at the Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, June 17, 1908. Fargo: Hannaher and Schannach, 1909. It is one man's side of a controversy yet unsettled.
- Souvenir of 101st Anniversary, Old Pembina, North Dakota 1818-1939. Grand Forks: Washburn Printing Company, 1939. A memorial type of thing full of irrelevant material.
- Webb, Walter O. The Great Plains. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1936. A very good, general account of Great Plains. He devotes much of his book to the region south of the Northwest.
- Webb, W. E. Buffalo Land. Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers, 1872. A good general account of the culture built around the buffalo.

Wood, Louis A. The Red River Colony, Chronicles of Canada Series, ed. G. M. Wrong, Vol. XXII. Toronto: Glasgow Brook and Company, 1922. A short, general history of the Red River region.

B. PERIODICALS

Aldrich, Vernice. "Father George Antoine Belcourt, Red River Missionary," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. II, No. 1, 30-52. A well-written article on one of North Dakota's foremost missionaries.

Bill, Fred A. "Early Steamboating on the Red River," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. IX, No. 3, 137-205.

"Bishop Marty O.S.B., Apostle of the Sioux," The Indian Sentinel, Vol. II, No. 1. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Catholic Missions, (January) 1920, 1-9.

Briggs, Harold E. "The Settlement and Development of the Territory of Dakota," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. VII, No's 2 and 3, 114-149.

_____. "Pioneer River Transportation in Dakota," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. III, No. 3, 159-161.

Burlingame, Merrill G. "The Buffalo in Trade and Commerce," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. III, No. 4, 262-291.

Burr, A. G. "The Organization of Bottineau County," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. IX, No. 1, 3-20.

Chellain, Louis. "Red River Colony," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Vol. LX. December 1778 to May 1779, 47-55.

Dunlevy, Ursula. "The Canadian Halfbreed Rebellions of 1870 and 1885," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. IX, No. 3, 86-113, Vol. IX, No. 4, 137-166.

Gillette, John. "Church Membership in North Dakota," Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota, Vol. XV, No. 3, 251-263. An interesting account of Church membership in North Dakota. It has some good tables.

Gunn, J. G. "The Selkirk Settlement," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 4, 46-60.

_____. "A Trip Through Red River Valley in 1864,"

North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. I, No. 4, 37-40.

Heilborn, Berta. "Isaac Stevens and the Pacific Railroad Survey of 1853," Minnesota Historical Review, Vol. VII, No. 2, 127-149.

Kleber, Albert. "Dakota Documents," The Spirit, (St. Meinrads, Indiana), Vol. X, No. 1, 7-23. A real contribution from one of the abbeys which sent missionaries to North Dakota.

Knapland, Paul, (ed.). "Gladstone on the Red River Rebellion 1820," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, Vol. III, No. 3, 76-77.

Libby, Orin G. "Some Aspects of Mid-America," Minnesota Historical Review, Vol. IV, No.'s 5 and 6, 213-228.

Nute, Grace L. "Red River Trails," Minnesota Historical Review, Vol. VI, No. 3, 279-282.

"Hudson's Bay Company Posts in Minnesota Country," Minnesota Historical Review, Vol. XXII, 270-289.

Pfaller, Benedict. "Benedictine Roots in North Dakota," The Abbey Chronicle, (Richardton, North Dakota), Vols. XIV, XV, XVI, XVII. An article written by a North Dakota priest. The author is one of the state's foremost Church historians.

"The Most Reverend Vincent Wherle, O.S.B., The First Bishop of Bismarck (1855-1941)," The Swiss Record (Madison, Wisconsin), March 1950, 31-33. This is also well done.

Phillips, Charles. "Early Religion Activities in North Dakota," Quarterly Journal of the University of North Dakota, Vol. XIII, No. 3, 300-414.

Pritchett, John P. "Some Red River Fur Trade Activities," Minnesota Historical Review, Vol. V, No. 6, 401-423.

Pyle, Joseph G. "James J. Hill," Minnesota Historical Review, Vol. II, No. 5, 295-323.

Rife, Clarence. "Norman Kittson and the Fur Trade at Pembina," Minnesota Historical Review, Vol. VI, No. 2, 225-252.

Schell, Herbert S. "Official Immigration Activities of Dakota Territory," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. VII, No. 1, 5-24.

Shanley, John. "The Founding of the Catholic Church in North Dakota," Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Vol. II, 1908, 1-34. It is little more than an outline with facts pushed in.

Slaughter, Linda. "Leaves From Northwest History," Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota, Vol. I, 1906, 200-292. It is mainly a life of Father Genin, a missionary of North Dakota for some years. Her account is not always accurate.

Taylor, Joseph H. "Fort Berthold Agency in 1869," North Dakota Historical Quarterly, Vol. IV, No. 4, 220-226.

Van Dyke, Henry. "Red River of the North," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, Vol. IX, December 1879, to May 1880, 801-817. A good article on social phase of Red River region.

Wherle, Vincent. "Missionary Recollections," Extension Magazine for August 1937, 19-35.

C. UNPUBLISHED MATERIALS

Moore, Kenneth R. "Government Relations With the Dakota Sioux." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Montana State University Library, Montana State University, 1937. A very good account of Indians' and whites' relations after 1851

Schier, (Sister) Angela. "The History of Indian Missions in North Dakota." Unpublished Master's Thesis. Graduate School Library, Catholic University of America, 1938. It is a far from comprehensive account of the missions, but a contribution, nevertheless.

Weber, Gerald. "John Shanley, First Bishop of Fargo." Unpublished Master's Thesis, Library, St. Paul Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, 1951. A fair biography.